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THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VOL. V.

Psalms LXXIII—CL.

THE REVISED TEXT; WITH COMMENTS SELECTED FROM THE CHOICEST, MOST ILLUMINATING AND
HELPFUL THOUGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES, TAKEN FROM EIGHT
HUNDRED DEVOUT SCHOLARS.

PREPARED BY

J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER, D.D.

"What the heart is in man, that the Psalter is in the Bible." *Arndt.*—"The Psalms may well be the heart, they are so full of sweet affections and passions. In other Scriptures God speaks to us, but in the Psalms men speak to God and to their own hearts." *Gibbes.*—"We cannot pray the Psalms without having our hearts opened, our affections enlarged, our thoughts drawn heavenward. He who can pray them best is nearest to God, knows most of the Spirit of Christ, is ripest for heaven."—*Bishop Perowne.*

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INDEX.

THIRD BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

Psalm		PAGE
LXXIII.,	.	5
" LXXIV.,	.	19
" LXXV.,	.	25
" LXXVI.,	.	28
" LXXVII.,	.	32
" LXXVIII.,	.	40
" LXXIX.,	.	47
" LXXX.,	.	50
" LXXXI.,	.	53
" LXXXII.,	.	59
" LXXXIII.,	.	63
" LXXXIV.,	.	66
" LXXXV.,	.	74
" LXXXVI.,	.	79
" LXXXVII.,	.	85
" LXXXVIII.,	.	91
" LXXXIX.,	.	93

FOURTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

Psalm XC.,	.	103
" XCI.,	.	118
" XCII.,	.	125
" XCIII.,	.	131
" XCIV.,	.	134
" XCV.,	.	140
" XCVI.,	.	148
" XCVII.,	.	154
" XCVIII.,	.	160
" XCIX.,	.	162
" C.,	.	167
" CI.,	.	169
" CII.,	.	173
" CIII.,	.	179
" CIV.,	.	189
" CV.,	.	205
" CVI.,	.	210

FIFTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

Psalm CVII.,	.	215
" CVIII.,	.	224
" CIX.,	.	225
" CX.,	.	231

A 8089
V.5

School of Theology
at Claremont

	PAGE
Psalm CXI., ...	242
“ CXII., ...	248
“ CXIII., ...	255
“ CXIV., ...	257
“ CXV., ...	259
“ CXVI., ...	263
“ CXVII., ...	276
“ CXVIII., ...	277
“ CXIX., 1-16, ...	284
“ “ 17-32, ...	294
“ “ 33-48, ...	301
“ “ 49-64, ...	309
“ “ 65-80, ...	315
“ “ 81-96, ...	322
“ “ 97-112, ...	329
“ “ 113-128, ...	336
“ “ 129-144, ...	341
“ “ 145-160, ...	349
“ “ 161-176, ...	352
“ CXX., ...	360
“ CXXI., ...	363
“ CXXII., ...	368
“ CXXIII., ...	372
“ CXXIV., ...	374
“ CXXV., ...	377
“ CXXVI., ...	380
“ CXXVII., ...	386
“ CXXVIII., ...	391
“ CXXIX., ...	396
“ CXXX., ...	399
“ CXXXI., ...	406
“ CXXXII., ...	410
“ CXXXIII., ...	415
“ CXXXIV., ...	420
“ CXXXV., ...	422
“ CXXXVI., ...	425
“ CXXXVII., ...	430
“ CXXXVIII., ...	435
“ CXXXIX., ...	440
“ CXL., ...	453
“ CXLI., ...	454
“ CXLII., ...	459
“ CXLIII., ...	461
“ CXLIV., ...	467
“ CXLV., ...	470
“ CXLVI., ...	479
“ CXLVII., ...	484
“ CXLVIII., ...	491
“ CXLIX., ...	496
“ CL., ...	500

NOTE.—A few changes have been made in the Revised Text, mainly in accordance with the rendering preferred by the American Committee; and some variant readings have been added in parenthesis. B.

THIRD BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

PSALMS LXXIII.—LXXXIX.

PSALM LXXIII.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 SURELY God is good to Israel,
<i>Even</i> to such as are pure in heart.</p> <p>2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone ;
My steps had well nigh slipped.</p> <p>3 For I was envious at the arrogant,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.</p> <p>4 For there are no bands [<i>pangs</i>] in their
death :
But their strength is firm.</p> <p>5 They are not in trouble as <i>other</i> men ;
Neither are they plagued like <i>other</i> men.</p> <p>6 Therefore pride is as a chain about their
neck ;
Violence covereth them as a garment.</p> <p>7 Their eyes stand out with fatness :
They have more than heart could wish.</p> <p>8 They scoff, and in wickedness utter oppres-
sion :
They speak loftily.</p> <p>9 They have set their mouth in the heavens,
And their tongue walketh through the
earth.</p> <p>10 Therefore his people return hither :
And waters of a full <i>cup</i> are wrung out by
them.</p> <p>11 And they say, How doth God know ?
And is there knowledge in the Most High ?</p> <p>12 Behold, these are the wicked ;
And, being alway at ease, they increase in
riches.</p> <p>13 Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart,
And washed my hands in innocency ;</p> <p>14 For all the day long have I been plagued
And chastened every morning.</p> <p>15 If I had said, I will speak thus ;</p> | <p>Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the
generation of thy children.</p> <p>16 When I thought how I might know this,
It was too painful for me ;</p> <p>17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God,
And considered their latter end.</p> <p>18 Surely thou settest them in slippery places :
Thou castest them down to destruction.</p> <p>19 How are they become a desolation in a mo-
ment !
They are utterly consumed with terrors.</p> <p>20 As a dream when one awaketh ;
So, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt
despise their image.</p> <p>21 For my heart was grieved,
And I was pricked in my reins :
22 So brutish was I, and ignorant ;
I was <i>as</i> a beast before thee.</p> <p>23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee :
Thou hast holden my right hand.</p> <p>24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory.</p> <p>25 Whom have I in heaven <i>but thee</i> ?
And there is none upon earth that I desire
beside thee.</p> <p>26 My flesh and my heart faileth :
<i>But</i> God is the strength of my heart and my
portion for ever.</p> <p>27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall
perish :
Thou hast destroyed all them that go a
whoring from thee.</p> <p>28 But it is good for me to draw near unto
God :
I have made the Lord God my refuge,
That I may tell of all thy works.</p> |
|---|---|

THE Psalms in the Third Book differ in some important points from the preceding. Eleven are attributed to Asaph, four to the sons of Korah, one to Ethan, and one only to David. Their character is for the most part didactic, grave, solemn, and sententious. They are pervaded by a deep feeling of melancholy, relieved, however, by flashes of spiritual hope; containing at once the most harrowing descriptions of national calamities, and the clearest anticipations of a futurity of blessedness. It is observable that from the forty-second to the eighty-fourth Psalms the name Elohim is used almost exclusively. This is conclusive against the assumption that such an usage indicates an early date, for these Psalms, with very few exceptions, belong to the post-Davidic period, and are even assigned in part by some critics to a far later age.

Psalm 73. This Psalm may have been composed by Asaph, the contemporary of David, but the name appears to have been borne by some of his descendants. The indications of date are uncertain. The progress or triumph of ungodliness is a feature common to every age, nor are the complaints stronger than those found in the Psalms of David. The apostasy of which the Psalmist speaks is rather moral than ceremonial; the unbelief rather of practical atheism than of heathenish superstition. The sanctuary is still standing (v. 17), the Psalmist goes there for instruction and comfort. The belief in a future retribution is definite (v. 24), not like that of Job, a strong aspiration, or even subjective conviction, but based on the Divine promise. The language is archaic, and the style somewhat obscure, resembling to some extent the Book of Job, with which the author was evidently familiar. Upon the whole it appears most probable that we have here a product of the Solomonian age, written at a season when a turbulent and corrupt nobility had the upper hand, and vicious habits were taking deep root in the nation. A few years before the death of Solomon, or the period immediately following the accession of his son, would supply abundant materials for such reflections.

Cook.

The same problems that are discussed in Psalms 37, 49, and in the Book of Job, are treated here, and with similar solution. But the vindication of God's ways by Asaph is more satisfactory, and the confidence and joy in God are more explicit than we find in Job. Indeed the veil that conceals the heavenly world was lifted before him. Everything seemed bright and clear for the future to one who could

say, "Thou wilt guide me by Thy counsel, and thereafter receive me into glory." *De Witt.*

Perhaps no man ever looked thoughtfully on the world as it is, without seeing much that was hard to reconcile with a belief in the love and wisdom of God. One form of this moral difficulty pressed heavily upon the pious Jew under the old dispensation. It was this: Why should good men suffer, and bad men prosper? The law told him that God was a righteous Judge, meting out to men in this world the due recompense of their deeds. The course of the world, where those who had cast off the fear of God were rich and powerful, made him ready to question this truth, and was a serious stumbling-block to his faith. This is the perplexity which appears in this Psalm, as it does in the thirty-seventh, and also in the Book of Job. Substantially it is the same problem; but it is met differently. In the thirty-seventh Psalm the advice given is to wait, to trust in Jehovah, and to rest assured that in the end the seeming disorder will be set right even *in this world*. The wicked will perish, the enemies of Jehovah be cut off, and the righteous will be preserved from evil, and inherit the land. Thus God suffers wickedness *for a time*, only the more signally to manifest His righteousness in overthrowing it. That is the first, the simplest, the most obvious solution of the difficulty. In this Psalm the conclusion is in part the same as that in Psalm 37, in part it is far higher. The Psalmist here is not content merely with visible retribution in this world. He sees it, indeed, in the case of the ungodly. When he was tempted to envy their lot, when he had all but yielded to the sophistry of those who would have persuaded him to be even as they, the temptation was subdued by the reflection that such prosperity came to an end as sudden as it was terrible. But he does not place over against this, on the other side, an earthly portion of honor and happiness for the just. Their portion is in God. He is the stay and the satisfaction of their hearts now. He will take them to Himself and to glory hereafter. This conviction it is which finally chases away the shadows of doubt, and brings light and peace into his soul. And this conviction is the more remarkable, because it is reached in spite of the distinct promise made of temporal recompense to piety, and in the absence of a full and definite revelation with regard to the life to come. In the clear light of another world and its certain recompenses, such perplexities either vanish or lose much of their sharpness. When we confess that God's righteousness has a larger the-

atre for its display than this world and the years of man, we need not draw hasty conclusions from "the slight whisper" of His ways which reaches us here. P.

Psalm 73 might have been written at any point from David to Ezra. The writer had seen the wicked prosper apparently more than the righteous, and he was sorely troubled. He sets before us their ungodly pride; their unaccountable prosperity; and his own perplexity and distress over this strange problem, until he went into God's sanctuary and there saw their fearful end portrayed. This relieves his mind of its difficulty, and suggests the far different end of the righteous—amid the glories of which his song closes. The difficulty which troubled Asaph has troubled other minds in every age. The facts which he saw in the open world before him may be seen anywhere, in every age. It is, however, only the first or surface view of things which makes the trouble. Asaph at first tacitly assumed not only that retribution from God for the sins of men ought to be finished and made perfect in this present life, laying over nothing to be evened up in the world to come, but also that it ought to be *kept good and perfect all along*, step by step, day by day, so that an observer, dropping his eyes upon God's ways toward men at any point would see justice meted out promptly with no delay and with unvarying perfection. But this assumption is without foundation. Such retribution, immediate and perfect, is not God's way. His ways take *time* for their complete unfolding. Manifestly He proposes to *bear long* with the wicked in order to make full proof of the power of forbearance and love upon human hearts to bring them to repentance. And if, as we see here, this system of forbearance and delay of retribution involves some moral trial to the righteous as well as to the wicked, God does not for that reason reject it, but finds use for it in a system wisely constructed for the largest discipline of moral probation. In this line lie the moral lessons of the Psalm before us. C.

The seventy-third Psalm is a very striking record of the mental struggle which an eminently pious Jew underwent, when he contemplated the respective conditions of the righteous and the wicked. Fresh from the conflict, he somewhat abruptly opens the Psalm with the confident enunciation of the truth of which victory over doubt had now made him more and more intelligently sure than ever, that "*God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*" And then he relates the most fatal shock which his faith had received, when he

contrasted the prosperity of the wicked, who, though they proudly contemned God and man, prospered in the world and increased in riches, with his own lot, who, though he had cleansed his heart and washed his hands in innocency, had been "*plagued all the day long and chastened every morning.*" The place where his doubts were removed and his tottering faith re-established, was "*the sanctuary of God.*" God Himself was the Teacher. The true estimate at which he afterward arrived is found in vs. 18-20. T. T. Perowne.

For awhile the Psalmist's faith is staggered, is almost overthrown; but in the house of God, having acquired that clear sight and serene gaze usual when a soul in its sorrow betakes itself to trustful and submissive communion with God, he obtains a glimpse of God's higher and grander purposes. He sees that the great possession of the righteous, and the high reward bestowed on them, is the favor of God and communion with Him—an inheritance reaching up to a future life, and there only unfolding the fulness of its treasures. At length, therefore, peace returns to him, and he looks hopefully forward to that glorious, eternal future. B. and F. Evangelical Review.

1. Remarkably the Psalm opens by affirming the conclusion which he reaches at the end. It is as if he would say: Though, as I am about to show you, my mind has labored long and most painfully over this perplexing problem, yet I have come at last most fully to this conclusion, God is surely good to His true Israel. He would have us remember that by "*Israel*" He means only the pure in heart. C.

4. **No bands in their death.** We must remember that the Psalmist is describing here not the fact, but *what seemed to him* to be the fact, in a state of mind which he confesses to have been unhealthy. No fetters are, so to speak, laid upon their limbs, so that they should be delivered over bound to their great enemy. They are not beset with sorrows, sufferings, miseries, which by impairing health and strength bring them to death. P.—They are of those who *die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.* Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened either with remembrance of their sins or the prospect of their misery, but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying. H.

The notion is still prevalent that a quiet death means a happy hereafter. The Psalmist had

observed that the very reverse is true. Careless persons become hardened, and continue presumptuously secure even to the last. S.—*Moral character*, and not the uncertain and perhaps involuntary experience in dying, *is the one factor that decides our state and destiny in the coming world*. Character is the resultant of living, not the upshot of a dying hour. Faith, repentance, consecration, service, discipline, love, and prayer, enter largely into it, and mould and give it expression and vital force. *Death simply completes life's work*, and puts upon our matured character, be it good or evil, the impress of eternity. What we sow in time, and that only, we shall reap in eternity. *Sherwood*.

5. Not in trouble as other men.

These men seem exempt not only from the frailties and infirmities of men, but even from the common lot of men. P.—The prosperous wicked escape the killing toils which afflict the mass of mankind; their bread comes to them without care, their wine without stint. Ordinary domestic and personal troubles do not appear to molest them. While many saints are both poor and afflicted, the prosperous sinner is neither. He is worse than other men, and yet he is better off. S.

6. *Pride ties on their chain*, or necklace. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceases to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is, as what principle ties it on and with what spirit it is worn. H.

7. In the last clause the marginal version, "They pass the thoughts of the heart," comes nearer to the true sense. The imaginations of their heart, in the sense of their wicked devices, overflow from their very abundance. The original words seem to demand this construction. C.—There is no felicity in what the world adores; that wherein God Himself is happy, and the holy angels are happy, and in whose defect the devils are unhappy, that dare I call happiness; whatsoever the world terms happiness is to me an apparition or neat delusion, wherein there is no more of happiness than the name. *Browne*.

10. *Therefore He brings back His people hither, and waters of fulness are wrung out to them (or drained by them)*. This obscure verse admits of several interpretations, the most natural of which understands the sense to be, that God still suffers or requires His people to survey the painful spectacle and drain the bitter draught presented by the undisturbed pros-

perity of wicked men. A.—Though beloved of God, they have to drain the bitter cup; their sorrows are as full as the wicked man's prosperity. It grieves them greatly to see the enemies of God so high and themselves so low, yet the Lord does not alter His dispensations, but continues still to chasten His children and indulge His foes. The medicine cup is not for rebels, but for those whom Jehovah Rophi loves. S.

11. This must express the misgivings of God's people, with respect to the providential inequalities in question. When still brought back to the sight of these, they are constrained to ask how they can possibly be reconciled with the hypothesis of God's omniscience. Nothing can be more appropriate in the mouth of a perplexed and tempted believer than the question, How can God know this and yet suffer it?

12. *Lo, these are wicked (men), and (yet they are) secure forever, they increase strength (or substance)*. These are still the words of the perplexed believer, expressing his surprise at the prosperity of sinners. A.—Here is the standing enigma! The stumbling-block of faith! Here are the unjust rewarded and indulged, and that not for a day or an hour, but in perpetuity. Money runs to money, gold pieces fly in flocks; the rich grow richer, the proud grow prouder. Lord, how is this? Thy poor servants, who become yet poorer, and groan under their burdens, are made to wonder at Thy mysterious ways. S.

13. *Only (in) vain have I cleansed my heart, and in innocence have washed my hands*. These may be taken either indefinitely as the words of any person in the painful situation just described, or more specifically as the words of the Psalmist, by whom the whole class was in fact represented. They contain the inference which would be naturally drawn in such a situation, even by a true believer, but one tempted to repine and doubt by the sight of providential enigmas. "Since the wicked enjoy God's favor, all my endeavors to avoid sin are fruitless."

14. The Psalmist here contrasts his own afflictions with the undisturbed enjoyments of his wicked neighbors. "While they, though wicked, still increase in wealth and seem secure forever, I, who have faithfully endeavored to avoid sin and to do the will of God, am subjected, every day and all day, to privation and distress." A.—That I have made my heart pure and washed my hands morally clean is altogether in vain, bringing me no adequate re-

ward. For I have been vexed and scourged all the day long and chastened every morning. I see no such hard lot befalling the wicked. His heart-troubles and perplexities have reached their maximum. C.—His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, *every morning* with the morning, and they continued without intermission *all the day long*. This he thought was very hard, that when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spake feelingly when he spake of his own troubles; there is no disputing against sense, except by faith.

15-20. We have seen what a strong temptation the Psalmist was in to envy prospering profaneness; now here we are told how he kept his footing and got the victory. H.

15. Speak thus. *Thus declare, i.e., publicly express my doubts and sceptical misgivings.* This, as it has been well observed, the true believer never does until he is able to announce his conflict and his victory together. *The generation of Thy sons*, the contemporary race of true believers, called the sons of God, not only as the objects of His love, but as partakers of His nature. *Treated perfidiously*, proved false to them, by weakening the foundation of their hope, instead of strengthening their faith and allaying their misgivings. A.—I do God's Church a great deal of injury, which hath always been under afflictions, if I think or say that all her piety hath been without hope, or her hope without effect. *Diodati*.

15-17. God does not judge men in the hasty way in which we judge them. His counsel takes in other ends than merely to make the righteous happy and the unrighteous unhappy. He has a purpose in His forbearance with the guilty. He endures with much long-suffering and does them good continually that He may bring them to Himself. He has a purpose in the painful discipline He often appoints the godly; to make them purer, holier, stronger men. *A. Mackennal*.

Asaph was embarrassed by the difficulties which the prosperity of the ungodly presents at first sight to every earnest student of the laws of the Divine government of the world. The phenomenon had almost driven him into scepticism: "My feet had almost swerved," he says, "my treadings had well-nigh slipped" (v. 2). Thus for a time it seemed to the Psalmist, who had been "punished" through the long day of life, and chastened morning by morning, that "he had cleansed his heart in vain, and washed his hands in innocency" (v.

13). Yet to speak thus, he felt, was to offend against the generation of God's children. It was to abandon their cause to the despair of unbelief. This conviction held him in suspense till he "went into the sanctuary of God, and thought on the latter end of the ungodly." H. P. L.

16. *And I meditated to know this; a trouble (was) it in my eyes.* Although he abstained from openly expressing what he thought, he still did think, he pondered the whole matter, with a view to understand it, to discover some solution of the mystery, which not only puzzled but distressed him. The apparent inequality of God's providential dealings was a toil, a trouble, an unhappiness, in his esteem. A.—A trouble or a weariness, as of a great burden laid upon me. Thought could not solve the problem. The brain grew wearier and the heart heavier. Light and peace come to us, not by thinking, but by faith. "In Thy light we shall see light." God Himself was the teacher. P.

17. Then understood I their end. This does not exactly mean the termination of their life, but as the word literally signifies, their after destiny, their ultimate portion. Up to the end of their life, as he points out in the first place (v. 4), they are supposed to be prosperous. (Compare Prov. 23 : 17, 18.) The retribution must therefore be after death, or not at all. In the three following verses five points are enumerated, in which the Psalmist finds a proof of Divine judgment. *Cook*.

He was sorely troubled until he went into God's sanctuary and studied their latter end in the light of the revelations of God made there. It is implied (not expressed) that he then found relief. If the question be asked, By what means did the Psalmist obtain at the sanctuary such light respecting the final doom of the wicked? the answer is: From the public reading of the written Word of God there and from the rehearsal of inspired songs in the worship of the sanctuary. The Pentateuch, certainly in their hands then, was full of demonstrations of the sudden and fearful end of the wicked. C.

18. The conclusion is remarkable. That which dispels the Psalmist's doubts and restores his faith is the end of the ungodly in this world—their sudden reverses, their terrible overthrow in the very bosom of their prosperity. Hitherto he has not taken notice of this fact as he ought; he has been so dazzled with the prosperity of the wicked, that he has forgotten by what appalling judgments God vindicates His righteousness. He does not follow them into

the next world. His eye cannot see beyond the grave. P.—We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of Divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end; all is well that ends well, everlastingly well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable. H.

18, 19. The word for "surely" has usually the somewhat stronger sense of *only*. Only in slippery places, never on any solid foundation, Thou hast set and evermore wilt set them. Thou hast hurled them down into destruction. Suddenly, as in the twinkling of an eye, are they in desolation! C.—The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain; the high places in which Providence sets them are *slippery places*, where they cannot long keep footing; but when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favor or His promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling that it rests on firm ground. Their destruction is sudden and very great. They flourish for a time, but are undone forever. Their ruin is sure and inevitable; he speaks of it as a thing done. *They are cast down*; for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted. *Thou castest them down*. It is *destruction from the Almighty, from the glory of His power* (2 Thess. 1: 9).

20. What their prosperity now is; it is but an image, a vain show, a fashion of the world that passes away: it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; it is not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream which may please us a little while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our repose; but how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false; when we awake we find it so. A hungry man *dreams that he eats, but he wakes, and his soul is empty* (Isa. 29: 8). H.

Their image. A fine expression, denoting the unsubstantial character of that outward show which had disturbed the Psalmist; the word is especially applied to idols, and probably means a shadowy form. Strictly speaking, all these points describe simply the destruction, death and ruin of the guilty; but they involve

the thought that there is an absolute difference between their fate and that of the righteous; and inasmuch as that difference cannot consist merely in the termination of existence, however sudden and terrible, since it is but the common fate of all, and in evil times most frequently that of the patriot and martyr, it must needs refer to the state after death. Cook.

Thou awakest. The metaphor is not infrequent in the Old Testament, and, like many others applying to the Divine nature, is saved from any possibility of misapprehension by the very boldness of its materialism. It has a well-marked and uniform meaning. God "awakes" when He ends an epoch of probation and long-suffering mercy by an act or period of judgment. So far, then, as the mere expression is concerned, there may be nothing more meant here than the termination by a judicial act in this life, of the transient "prosperity of the wicked." But the emphatic context seems to require that they should be referred to that final crash which irrevocably separates him who has "his portion in this life," from all which he calls his "goods." If so, then the whole period of earthly existence is regarded as the time of God's gracious forbearance and mercy; and the time of death is set forth as the instant when sterner elements of the Divine dealings start into greater prominence. A. M.

21. For. This explains the whole of the previous struggle. I was tempted to think thus, *for* I brooded over these difficulties till I became no better than the dumb cattle. So it ever is. Man does not show wisdom when he wears himself to no purpose with the moral and speculative problems which beset him. His highest wisdom is to stay himself upon God. P.

23, 24. The state of the righteous in its contrast. He is with God continually, and therefore in no real danger; God holds him up, so that *he* cannot slip; through life he is guided and then received into glory. This last expression involves far more than temporal prosperity, which it is scarcely probable that the Psalmist expected, and which certainly would be no adequate compensation for undeserved affliction; the glory must be the manifestation of that abiding Presence, which even here sustains, preserves, and guides the faithful. Cook.

It is the future only that can give him complete relief from the perplexities of the present; he escapes from time into the thought of eternity. God has thus "laid hold on his right hand;" God had saved him from the abyss of doubt: God would still guide His servant with

His counsel, and after that receive him to glory.
H. P. L.

The words that follow, in their exquisite beauty, need not comment or interpretation, but a heart in unison with them. They lift us up above the world, above doubts, and fears, and perplexities, into a higher and holier atmosphere ; we breathe the air of heaven.

The great difference, though with essential points of contact, between the hope of the life to come, as portrayed even in such a passage as this, and what we read in the New Testament, will best be understood by comparing the language here with Paul's language in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians (vs. 21-23). P.

23. *And (yet) I (am) still with Thee ; Thou hast held (me) by my right hand.* Notwithstanding his ungrateful and irrational conduct in God's presence, he had not been driven from it, as he justly might have been. The word translated *still* properly means *always*, and denotes that there had been no change or interruption in the previous relation of the parties. In the last clause he seems to return to the metaphor with which he set out. As the fatal error which he had escaped is in v. 2 represented as a fall, so here his preservation from it is ascribed to God's having held him up by his right hand. A.

"Though God has chastened me, He has not cast me off ; notwithstanding all the crosses of my life *I have been continually with Thee*, I have had Thy presence with me and Thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon Thee for ; and therefore though perplexed yet not in despair. Though God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet He has still *holden me by my right hand*, both to keep me that I should not desert Him or fly off from Him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burdens, or losing my way in the wildernesses through which I have walked.' H.

24. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel. Nothing is so emphatic as Scripture in setting forth the eternal hope and rich promise which attaches to man, and the peculiar and high place which he holds in the eye of God. This Bible centres in him. It is made for him with its wealth of instruction and promise and consolation. There is an eye from heaven ever directed upon him ; a hand stretched forth from heaven to guide and to uphold him. God takes upon Himself the conduct of His child's life. He leaves to no one inferior to

Himself the regulation of his ways. V.—Those who commit themselves to God shall be guided with His counsel, with the counsel both of His Word and of His Spirit, the best Counsellors. Those who are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to His glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, He will make our glory with Him the end we shall forever be happy in. Upon this consideration let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness. If God direct us in the way of our duty and prevent our turning aside out of it, He will afterward, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to His kingdom and glory, the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations. H.

He says, "He is continually with *me* ; He holds *me* ; He will guide *me* ; He will receive *me*." The man saw, and felt, and rejoiced in his own personal interest in God's care and love. And he did this (mark), in the very midst of affliction, with "flesh and heart failing ;" and in spite, too, of many wrong, and opposite, and sinful feelings, that had just passed away ; under a conviction of his own sinfulness and folly, and, as he calls it, even "brutishness." It is a blessed thing to have a faith like this. C. Bradley.

Afterward. After all our toil in labor and duty, after all our crosses and afflictions, after all our doubts and fears that we should never receive it ; after all the hidings of His face, and clouds and darkness that have passed over us ; and after all our battles and fightings for it, oh, then how seasonably will the reception of this reward come in : "*Afterward receive me to glory.*" Oh blessed *afterward* ; when all your work is done, when all your doubts and fears are over, and when all your battles are fought ; then, oh, then, ye shall receive the reward. John Spalding.

There is no long slumber between the race and the crown. The passage is short. To be dismissed from earth, from temptation, from passion, from the body, and from sin, is to be admitted into that greater but invisible world, upon the verge of which we are continually living. It is to emerge from time into eternity. It is to close the outward eye as needless, to lose sight of all its objects, and to open the inward eye upon the world of spirits. It is to say farewell to a group of weeping friends, and bid

welcome to the multitude of ransomed souls. It is to leave all care, and pain, and uncertainty, and sin forever behind us. It is also a passing into glory. God is there! He who is everywhere present, unseen, is there present to the lively apprehension of the redeemed. Christ is there! And the longing soul finds itself in His embrace. J. W. A.

What a contrast that is—the conscious blessedness rushing in close upon the heels of the momentary darkness of death. The spirit released from all its sin and its sore agony, struggling up at once into such strange Divine enlargement, a new star swimming into the firmament of heaven, a new face before the throne of God, another sinner redeemed from earth! The conscious, immediate blessedness of the departed—be he what he may, be his life whatsoever it may have been—who at last, standing with one foot on the verge of eternity, and poising himself for the flight, flings himself into the arms of Christ—the everlasting blessedness, the Christ-presence and the Christ-gladness. The flaming cherubim, and the sword that turneth every way, are gone, and the broad road into the city, the Paradise of God, with all its beauties and all its peaceful joy—a better Paradise, “a statelier Eden,” than that which we have lost, is flung open to us forever. A. M.

25. The heaven of blessedness and of glory is indeed nothing apart from God; but he who in love can call God his has heaven upon earth; and he who cannot call God his would have hell even in the midst of heaven. In this sense the Psalmist says, Whom have I in heaven? *i.e.*, Who there without Thee would be the object of my desire, the stilling of my longing? without Thee heaven, with all its glory, is a great waste and void; and with Thee to call Thee mine infinitely surpasses every possession and every desire of earth. D.—It pleases all the saints more that God is their salvation, whether temporal or eternal, than that He saves them. The saints look more at God than at all that is God's. They say, *We desire not Thine, but Thee*, or nothing of Thine like Thee. *Caryl*.

Heaven may be beautiful, but there is no beauty there like that of God; nay more, comparatively speaking, no beauty there save what is in God. Heaven may be social, full of created beings of lofty powers and most genial nature; but what are they all compared with God! This is the spontaneous utterance of all true love to God. The blessedness of His favor and friendship surpasses all other joy immeasurably. Nothing else should be once named or thought of in the comparison.

“Were I in heaven without my God,
‘T would be no joy to me.”

So also, earth, with its utmost attractions, affords nothing to be loved and enjoyed compared with God. C.

All the blessings of that future life are of a spiritual character. It is not the golden harps, not the cessation from work, not the still composure and changeless indwelling, not the society even, that makes the Heaven of heaven. All these are but the embodiments and rendering visible of the inward thing, a soul at peace with God in the depths of its being, an eye which gazes upon the Father, and a heart which wraps itself in His arms. Heaven is no heaven except in so far as it is the possession of God. That saying of the Psalmist is not an exaggeration, nor even a forgetting of the other elements of future blessedness, but it is a simple statement of the literal fact of the case, “I have none in Heaven but Thee!” God is the heritage of His people. To dwell in His love, and to be filled with His light, and to walk forever in the glory of His sunlit face, to do His will, and to bear His character stamped upon our foreheads—that is the glory and the perfectness to which we are aspiring. A. M.

The New Testament idea of heaven is not that of a jewelled world far away, but of a kingdom of God in the heart of every Christian—a joy and glory now begun, which are the morning twilight of the eternal day. Yes, heaven is not far off; it glows and shines and blooms around us whenever we are in true sympathy and communion with Him who is its Light and its Lord. *Interior*.—It is given us to own even Jesus Himself; to say, “O Christ Thou art mine,” “My Lord and my God,” “Whom have I in heaven but Thee?” Having Thee, I can easily renounce, or lose, all things beside. I would not care to possess, even if I could, Thy stars. Enough that I shall possess the internal contents and the bosom furniture of Thy Divine excellence; all Thy goodness and beauty, all Thy plans and dispositions; and shall I not be so established forever—let me humbly dare to speak it!—in the dear blessed ownership of Christ and His kingdom? *Bushnell*.

26. *Spent is my flesh and my heart; the rock of my heart and my portion (is) God to eternity.* *Flesh and heart*, body and soul, the whole man, or the whole life, outward and inward, bodily and mental. *The rock of my heart*, the support of my life, that on which it rests as on a solid basis. The idea is not simply that of strength, but of a strong foundation. *My portion*, the

source of my subsistence and my happiness. A.—“My flesh and my heart”—body and soul—languish, lose their vital force, sink under the pressure of weakness and the strain of toil ; but God is the rock of my heart and my everlasting portion. Oh how true to the experience of the child of God ! And how full of blessedness is this truth ! All enduring life, all abiding joy, are in God alone. C.

This verse contains a strong assertion of personal immortality ; given the destruction of the flesh, even of the heart, the body with all its powers, the heart with all its faculties and endowments, yet the destruction is but seeming, at the most temporary, for God will preserve or restore that nature in which personality and perpetuity of consciousness consist, and He will be the portion of the believer forever. All after-revelations could but confirm and justify this clear anticipation. Annihilation of consciousness was a thought inconceivable to him who held it. *Cook.*

My portion forever. My portion containeth Him whom the heavens, and heaven of heavens, can never contain. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion “forever ;” not for a year, or an age, or a million of ages, but for eternity. Without alteration, this God will be my God forever and ever, my guide and aid unto death ; nay, death, which dissolveth so many bonds, and untie such close knots, shall never part me and my portion, but give me a perfect and everlasting possession of it. *Swinnock.*—The contrast is too perfect to be evaded. On one side is the perishing body that will presently be laid in the grave ; on the other, the undying soul triumphantly realizing its full sense of immortality, as it clings in love and thankfulness to the unchangeable God. To be thus one with the Eternal Being was already to have a certain pledge of endless life. And it is the vision of this endless future—“my portion forever”—thus presented to the eye of the Psalmist in his retreat within the sanctuary, that completes the removal of his original difficulty with respect to the ways of God. Had this world been all, that difficulty must have proved insuperable. It melts away altogether beneath the rays of light which stream from one cardinal truth ; it is solved by the doctrine of the immortality of the soul of man. H. P. L.

Union with the Lord—what else is the ground of hope for immortality and eternal life under the new economy ? “Because I live,” said the Master, “ye shall live also” (John 14 : 9). Union with the Lord Himself, that is also the final ground of hope for life and happi-

ness beyond the grave under the old economy. E. C. B.

Nothing in life has any meaning, except as it draws us farther into God, and presses us more closely to Him. The world is no better than a complication of awkward riddles, or a gloomy storehouse of disquieting mysteries, unless we look at it by the light of this simple truth, that the eternal God is blessedly the last and only end of every soul of man. *Faber.*—It needs not only a living but an Infinite Person to enchain in everlasting love and exercise with ever-varying delight *all* the heart and strength and mind and soul of man. In the living God alone can the creature find its all-sufficiency. In the Creator discovered and reconciled, in Jehovah enthroned as a Sovereign and accepted as a portion, the problem of highest happiness is solved. The intellect expands, the soul is glad, and the life rises to its most blissful level from the happy day that you enter into a personal relation to the all-sufficient Jehovah, and realize in its full significance “God is Love.” *Hamilton.*

Love desires to please God, and therefore to be freed from all that is displeasing to Him. It desires all suitable nearness, acquaintance, union, and communion. It is weary of distance and alienation. It takes advantage of every notice of God, to renew and exercise these desires. Every message and mercy from God is fuel for love, and while we are short of perfection, stirs up our desires after more of God. The soul is where it loves. God and Christ, heaven and holiness, dwell in the heart which loves them fervently. And if heaven dwell in my heart, shall I not desire to dwell in heaven ? When love becomes our fixed nature, we shall be no more weary of loving than the sun of shining. God Himself will be the full and everlasting object of love. Perfect, joyful complacency in God is the heaven which I desire and hope for. He has all in Himself that I need or can desire. There is nothing for love to cleave to, either above Him, beyond Him, or without Him. *Baxter.*

When flesh and heart fail, His strength is near. Yes, we have seen the dying visage lighted up with the angelic smile of triumph, and have heard the song of rejoicing from lips already cold. A preternatural glimpse of worlds beyond has been granted even here. Hear the eminent theologian, Andrew Rivet, just before his departure : “I shall shortly no more know the difference between day and night. I am come to the eve of that great and eternal day, and am going to that place where the sun shall no more give light. The sense of

Divine favor increaseth in me every moment. My pains are tolerable, and my joys inestimable!" Hear the dying Halyburton: "For those fourteen or fifteen years I have been studying the promises; but I have seen more of the book of God this night than in all that time." Hear good President Finley: "I am full of triumph—I triumph through Christ." J. W. A.

Bunson's last words: "'In spite of all my failings and my imperfections, I have desired, I have sought, what is noble here below. But my richest experience is the having known Jesus Christ. Oh, how good it is to contemplate life from this elevation! Now we see how obscure a thing our existence on earth has been. Up, up—it does not become darker, but ever brighter, brighter! I am now in the kingdom of God. Hitherto it has only been a presentiment. O my God, how beautiful are Thy tabernacles!'"

"As his attention was directed to a brilliant sunset, 'Yes,' said he, in English, 'that is beautiful, the love of God is in everything.' 'God is life and love, the love that wills, the will that loves.' There is no death in God. I see Christ, and I see God through Christ. Christ sees us, He creates us, He must become all in all. Those who live in Christ, who live loving Him, they are His. Those who do not live His life do not belong to Him, whatever may be the name by which they are called, or the confession of faith which they sign. I see clearly that we are all sinners. We have only Christ in God. We exist only in proportion as we are in God; we are all sinners, but we live in God and we have eternal life. We have lived this eternal life in proportion as we have lived in God. All the rest is nothing. Christ is the Son of God, and we are His children only when the spirit of love that was in Christ is in us."

27. All that depart from God are doomed to chase shadows; to wander on in vain agitation and desire, without any real advance toward the object in view; like a person in a dream, that imagines himself always going forward, though he never moves. The Divine Being will abandon the creature that forsakes Himself to barrenness, disappointment, and remorse; He will darken the heaven above him, and seal up the springs of life and peace from his taste:—"All that are far from Thee shall perish." *R. Hall.*

The union between God and His people being often represented by the figure of a conjugal relation, their violation of the covenant is spoken of as spiritual whoredom or adultery.

In the same sense our Saviour calls the unfaithful Israel of His day a wicked and adulterous generation. The persons threatened with destruction here are not merely sinners in general, but the wicked members of the ancient Church or chosen people in particular. *A.*

28. It is good for me to draw near to God. When he saith *'tis good*, his meaning is *'tis best*. This positive is superlative. It is more than good for us to draw nigh to God at all times, it is best for us to do so, and it is at our utmost peril not to do so; "For, lo," said the Psalmist, "they that are far from Thee shall perish!" *Caryl.*

Religion commences with the commencement of direct personal relations with God, and continues so long as those personal relations continue. Prayer and communion are as much a part of religion as converse and communion are a part of friendship. Our very love to God will needs draw all sorts of hearty address to Him and spiritual fellowship with Him in its wake. And Scripture is loaded with multiplied affirmations and diversified implications of this. Its pages are saturated with the spirit of devoteness. Prayer and communion, all that combine to compose spirituality of life, are involved by statement or by inference in almost every chapter. *Parkhurst.*

Devout meditation and fervent prayer include the fundamental elements and duties of spiritual life; *meditation*, the opening of the heart to and the appropriation by the heart of heavenly truth and promise, so that the kindled flame of devout feeling is kept aglow, and *prayer*, the heart's expression to God under the force of this stirred feeling, expression in whatever form the heart's quickened desires and sense of need may prompt. Out of this twofold action of the heart, out of devout thought and prayerful expression are born, by this continued action are maintained in healthful vigor, all the spiritual forces and experiences of the soul's Divine life, all the forces that give energy for duty and strength for trial, all the experiences that give vitality to hope and happiness. Therefore affirms the Psalmist, "*It is good for me to draw near to God!*" *B.*

He that knows how to pray has the secret of safety in prosperity and of support in trouble. He has the art of overruling every enemy, and of turning every loss into a gain. He has the power of soothing every care, of subduing every passion, and of adding a relish to every enjoyment. Many things are good for me, but none so good as to draw nigh to God. *Jay.*—In the very moment when thou prayest, a treasure

is laid up for thee in heaven. No Christian's prayer falls back from the closed gates of heaven; each enters there like a messenger-dove; some bring back immediate visible answers; but all enrich our store of blessings there, and all return to the heart with the fragrance of peace on them, from the holy place where they have been. The Christian, even when he is walking for recreation, in his converse with others, in silence, in reading, in all rational pursuits, finds opportunity for prayer. And although he is only thinking on God in the little chamber of his soul, and calling on his Father with silent aspiration, God is near him, and with him, for He is still speaking to him. *Gregory.*

He walks in the presence of God that converses with Him in frequent prayer and communion; that runs to Him with all his necessities; that asks counsel of Him in all his doubts; that opens all his wants to Him; that weeps before Him for all his sins; and that asks remedy and support for his weakness; that fears Him as a Judge, reverences Him as a Lord, and obeys him as a Father. *Jeremy Taylor.*

Be alone with God, that your soul may be free to speak to Him, and to hear Him. But be alone in your inmost hearts, shutting out busy, anxious thoughts, that they throng not in with the prayers, and cloud not the sight and thought of God. Practise in life whatever thou prayest for, and God will give it thee more abundantly. *Pusey.*—If you long to bring forth all the fruit of the Spirit, strike your roots deep and wide in private prayer. That faith and support, that strength and grace, which you seek of God in secret, that they may be exercised in the hour of need God will in that hour give you before men. *Anon.*

Christ being more completely formed within, the believer's seasons of communion with the Father spread themselves more widely through his days and nights. He passes very frequently, almost unconsciously, and by imperceptible gradations of feeling, from his ordinary existence among the things of this world into direct converse with that Friend who is ever nearest, while also most high and most mighty. The current of adoring thought flows on in joyous, satisfying concord with the Eternal Will. We do not stop, perhaps, to shape every aspiration into articulate speech but we yield to the Divine breath, and move whithersoever the Spirit that maketh intercession moves. A larger and larger share of devotion will consist in thanking and praise—a sure mark of spiritual

growth. Some new blessing—a victory of faith, a fresh beam of light falling from heaven on the path—will as often stir the soul to its heavenly conversation as a trial, loss, or throb of pain. There will be no anxious concern about answers, for the felt blessedness of the act is itself an answer. There is no doubt that God will hear, because it is known that He listened before His child called. May not something like this be the meaning of the prayer that is “without ceasing?” *F. D. H.*

We cannot too keenly feel, each one for himself, that a still and secret life with God must energize all holy duty, as vigor in every fibre of the body must come from the strong, calm, faithful beat of the heart. To one who is conscious of defect in his own piety, respecting the friendship of the soul with God, there will be great aptness and beauty in the appeal of a foreign preacher: “Why fleest thou from solitude? Why dost thou shun the lonely hour? Why is it, that to many of you there cometh not, through the whole course of the week, a single hour for self-meditation? You go through life like dreaming men. Ever among mankind, and never with yourselves. You have torn down the cloister, but why have you not erected it within your own hearts? Lo, my brother, if thou wouldst seek out the *still hour*, only a single one every day, and if thou wouldst meditate on the love which called thee into being, which hath overshadowed thee all the days of thy life with blessing, or else by mournful experiences hath admonished and corrected thee; this would be to draw near to thy God! Thus wouldst thou take Him by the hand. But whenever, in ceaseless dissipation of heart, thou goest astray, the sea of the Divine blessing shall surround thee on all sides, and yet thy soul shall be athirst. Wilt thou draw near to God? Then seek the *still hour*.” (*Tholuck.*) *Phelps.*

In the still hour of personal communion with God the soul is best and most prepared for all its *duties* to man and God. Then and there the best *knowledge*, the deepest *conviction*, of duty is gotten, or more clearly, deeply impressed. There the judgment and conscience receive most light upon questions of practical difficulty. There the will is most effectually disciplined against wilfulness, trained for practice in self-denial, for the putting forth of energy in the true work of life. There also, through the *present working* of Divine grace, the repulsive propensities to evil of flesh and spirit are more and more brought into subjection, the adorning graces of simplicity, meekness, truth-

fulness, and purity are maintained and augmented in their power. There the heart is made peaceful and happy in its toil, by the daily deepening of its responsive trust and love. From habitual solitary communion with God, too, we get all needful preparation for *trials*, light or grievous, preparation for the emergencies of temptation or affliction, emergencies belonging to almost every day. And through the faithful use of the still hour, the Christian *makes the most of himself and of his life in this world*. He makes the most of himself and for himself. In the wrestle of that hour, he gets through Divine power that evenness of temper which keeps down alike rash judgments and excited passions. In the triumphant testing of God's truth and promise by a wrestling spirit, he receives such conviction of their reality as brings his soul more and more under their actuating power. All his spiritual energies are kept aroused and active. His faith is made more vital, active, fruitful. He develops in breadth and symmetry of character, grows daily unto the stature of a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus. And making *most of himself*, he makes *most for himself* here. It may not be in perishable treasure or enviously acknowledged fame. It is in something better far, in that peace of the soul that leans always and closely upon Jesus the Christ, in the calmness of hope, the assurance of expectant joy that looks all round the forward horizon and up into a cloudless heaven as he songfully journeys on. Thus, too, he makes the most of his *life* here, the most of *what can be achieved for others*. Christ's most eminent because successful toilers, in every age, have been those who have lived in the closest communion with Him. Holy men and women in every age, coming from the mount of the Divine *dwelling* have come *burning* as well as shining lights, clothed with His power in their heartfelt utterances. As their fellowship was with God, as they abode and walked in His light, so they ever brought God with them and *kept* His Spirit in their hearts, and thus were their toils directed, their words inspired, their yearning desires satisfied. B.

The characteristic of the wicked is separation from God, which can have but one result, absolute destruction; that of the faithful is union with Him, which secures all good in time and eternity; imposing one permanent duty, that of declaring His works. The sum-total amounts to this: the prosperity of the wicked may, or may not, last till death, but it is a mere phan-

tom, ending here in nothingness, and followed by everlasting shame; the life of the righteous is a journey under sure guidance, lighted by God's presence, and issuing in glory, with an entire fruition of blessedness forever. *Cook*.

As is plain from this Psalm, doubt may spring from the very depth and earnestness of a man's faith. In the case of the Psalmist, as in the case of Job, that which lay at the bottom of the doubt, that which made it a thing so full of anguish, was the deep-rooted conviction of the righteousness of God. Unbelief does not doubt, faith doubts. And God permits the doubt in His truest and noblest servants, as our Lord did in the case of Thomas, that he may thereby plant their feet the more firmly on the rock of His own everlasting truth. There is perhaps no Psalm in which faith asserts itself so triumphantly, cleaves to God with such words of lofty hope and affection, and that precisely because in no other instance has the fire been so searching, the test of faith so severe. It may be well to remember this when we see a noble soul compassed about with darkness, yet struggling to the light, lest we "vex one whom God has smitten, and tell of the pain of His wounded ones." P.

Doubts are in many cases the birth-pangs of clearer light. They are means by which we grow in knowledge, even in knowledge of heavenly things. Better far, no doubt, to grow in knowledge by quiet, steady increase of light, without these intervals of darkness and difficulty. But that is not granted to all. Many men have to grow by often doubting and by having their doubts cleared up. In that way only is the chaff separated from the grain, and the pure truth at last presented to their minds. In that way are prejudices, false notions, frivolities shaken off from the substantial truth, and they are blessed with the fulness of the knowledge of God. These doubts are often the fiery trial which burns up any wood, hay, or stubble which we may have erected in our souls, and leaves space for us to build gold, silver, precious stones. They are, in fact, as much the messengers of God's providence as any other voices that reach us. They may distress us, but they cannot destroy us, for we are in the hands of God. They may hide God's face from us, but they cannot stop the flow of His love; for He is our Father, and Christ hath redeemed us. To *trust* is in your power. To resign yourself lovingly to God in the full confidence that His love will do all that you can

need, and that out of darkness He will be sure to bring light; to walk to the uttermost of your power by the light that you already have; to hold fast by God's hand, and to trust the promises that He whispers in your conscience; that you can do, and that you ought to do. *Bishop Temple.*

We pronounce *too soon* upon the apparent inequalities of fame and recompense around us; while we fail to take in the future as well as the present, and attempt to solve the mysteries of time without including in the field of our survey the retributions of that eternity which forms the selva and hem of all the webs of earth. And we pronounce not only too soon but *very superficially* upon the inequalities of happiness in the lot of those who fear and those who scorn God; while we look mainly or merely to the outward circumstances of home and station and bodily well-being, but take no note of the inner and more enduring elements of felicity supplied to the sufferer for Christ by the blended powers of conscience and of hope—the one of them purified and pacified by the blood of the great Sacrifice on Calvary; the other of them steadily and cheerfully soaring to the glories and rest of the Mount Zion above. Faithful, in His cage, bearing the gibes and flouts of the rabble who thirsted for His blood, was one of the happiest men in all Vanity Fair, even ere the hour when His spirit mounted the fiery chariot that hurried Him to His celestial home. *W. R. Williams.*

In that world of light I shall *better understand God's works of providence*. The wisdom and goodness of them is little understood in small parcels. It is the union and harmony of all the parts which displays the beauty of them. And no one can see the *whole* together but God, and they that see it in the light of His celestial glory. Then I shall clearly know why God prospered the wicked and so much afflicted the righteous; why He set up the ungodly and put the humble under their feet; why He permitted so much ignorance, pride, lust, oppression, persecution, falsehood, and other sins in the world; why the faithful are so few; and why so many kingdoms of the world are left in heathenism, Mohammedanism, and infidelity. I shall know why I suffered what I did, and how many great deliverances I had, and how they were accomplished. All our misinterpretations of God's works and permissions will then be rectified, and all our controversies about them be at an end. *Baxter.*

Faith in Christ is the beginning of the heavenly experience, the beginning of that perfect and transforming love to God which is the sovereign thing in the better country. Seeking the indwelling of God's Spirit in the heart here on earth is the means by which we prepare ourselves for a perfect and boundless experience of life in that world to come. By noble service, consecrated and self-sacrificing, we prepare ourselves for the leisure and the rest, for the knowledge and power, for the holiness and the song, which are on high. How much do you desire heaven? Enough simply to take it as if the gates of pearl were opened at yonder doorway and you were permitted to walk in, or enough to work for it by the diligent use of every power offered to you in the Gospel? by faith in the Son of God, by service to Him, by prayer for the power of the Holy Ghost, by vigorous self-discipline, trying with the help of prayer, and with the Holy Spirit which comes in answer to prayer, to lift yourself into sympathy with God? That controlling and supreme desire which belongs to the faithful soul is a desire strong enough not merely to lead us to the present use of the means for its attainment, but strong enough to control all our future life. It must be a desire controlling and supreme in its energy, regulating and inspiring life, governing action, quickening to the use of every power for its accomplishment. And it must be a desire, associated with unselfish and benevolent affection, which seeks to raise others to the same experience which it hopes and longs for for itself. *R. S. S.*

Learn the means of growth in all Christian excellencies. Not by lamentations over our own deficiencies—though we need the humblest consciousness of these. Not by painful efforts after working ourselves into a happy consciousness of sonship, or after a purer life. But by forgetting all about ourselves, and occupying ourselves wholly with Jesus Christ, our Brother and our Sanctifier. The nearer we get to Him, the holier we become. The closer we press to Him, the liker Him we grow. The more we meditate on our Brother and our Lord, the more shall we be conscious that we, too, are sons of God and brethren of the Lord. The more firmly we clasp His hand, the more abundantly will healing and energy flow from His touch into our sick impotence. Since we claim to be called holy brethren, let us never forget Him who makes us so. If we would deserve the name, let us turn away our thoughts from all else, and keep our spirits fixed upon Him. Then a great peacefulness shall rest upon our

hearts, and we shall be holy as He is holy.
A. M.

Peace with God, in Christ, is definite assurance of glory. The devout believer of the Old Dispensation looked beyond the earthly horizons, and discerned a better country, even a heavenly. To us life and immortality are brought to light in the Gospel of the risen Christ. Without this hope well assured no man's cup of blessing is completely full. The craving for immortality, which is found in all healthy minds, demands assurance of answering reality. This is an element of blessedness to the rational soul. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the way the Book meets this craving, as the great truth breaks forth, and grows, and orbs itself at length in mid-heaven, a sun without a setting—a day without a night. The race has a mission. History has a culmination. Fragmentary knowledge completes itself. Unrequited wrong is brought to the bar of judgment. Virtue is rewarded. Sin is doomed. Death is swallowed up in victory! *Haydn.*

The vehemence with which Francis Newman rejects Christianity, as a religion supernaturally inspired, only adds emphasis to words like the following: "The great doctrine on which all practical religion depends—the doctrine which nursed the infancy and youth of human nature—is, 'the sympathy of God with the perfection of individual man.' Among pagans this was so marred by the imperfect character ascribed to the gods, and the dishonorable fables told concerning them, that the philosophers who undertook to prune religion too generally cut away the root, by alleging that God was mere intellect, and wholly destitute of affection. But, happily, among the Hebrews, the purity of God's character was vindicated; and with the growth of conscience in the highest minds

of the nation the ideal image of God shone brighter and brighter. The doctrine of His sympathy was never lost, and from the Jews it passed into the Christian Church. This doctrine, applied to that part of man which is Divine, is the well-spring of repentance and humility, of thankfulness, love, and joy. It reproves and it comforts; it stimulates and animates. This it is which led the Psalmist to cry, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.' This has satisfied prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with God as their portion. This has been passed from heart to heart for full three thousand years, and has produced bands of countless saints." *R. S. S.*

How marvellous is the adaptation of Scripture for the race for whom it was revealed! In its pages every conceivable condition of human experience is reflected as in a mirror. In its words every struggle of the heart can find appropriate and forceful expression. It is absolutely inexhaustible in its resources for the conveyance of the deepest feeling of the soul. It can translate the doubt of the perplexed; it can articulate the cry of the contrite; it fills the tongue of the joyous with carols of thankful gladness. *Swinnock.*

If a Christian man does not really and intelligently hold that his system of faith has a firmer basis, a nobler end, a more puissant energy, that it solves more problems, and is adapted to man's nature in a fuller sense than any other system, that it is the highest reason as well as the fullest redemption, and the highest reason because the only redemption, he virtually confesses that a greater than Christ is here. We rob faith of one of its strongest persuasions if we do not claim that it is perfectly rational. *H. B. Smith.*

PSALM LXXIV.

MASCHIL OF ASAPH.

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| <p>1 O God, why hast thou cast <i>us</i> off for ever ?
 Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture ?</p> <p>2 Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old,
 Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance ;
 <i>And</i> mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.</p> <p>3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual ruins,
 All evil the enemy hath done in the sanctuary.</p> <p>4 Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly ;
 They have set up their ensigns for signs.</p> <p>5 They seemed as men that lifted up Axes upon a thicket of trees.</p> <p>6 And now all the carved work thereof
 They break down with hatchet and hammers.</p> <p>7 They have set thy sanctuary on fire ;
 They have profaned the dwelling place of thy name even to the ground.</p> <p>8 They said in their heart, Let us make havoc of them altogether :
 They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.</p> <p>9 We see not our signs :
 There is no more any prophet ;
 Neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.</p> <p>10 How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach ?
 Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever ?</p> <p>11 Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand ?</p> | <p><i>Pluck it out of thy bosom and consume them.</i></p> <p>12 Yet God is my King of old,
 Working salvation in the midst of the earth.</p> <p>13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength :
 Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.</p> <p>14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,
 Thou gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.</p> <p>15 Thou didst cleave fountain and flood :
 Thou driedst up ever-flowing rivers.</p> <p>16 The day is thine, the night also is thine :
 Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.</p> <p>17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth :
 Thou hast made summer and winter.</p> <p>18 Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached the Lord,
 And that a foolish people have blasphemed thy name.</p> <p>19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the wild beast :
 Forget not the life of thy poor for ever.</p> <p>20 Have respect unto the covenant :
 For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of violence.</p> <p>21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed :
 Let the poor and needy praise thy name.</p> <p>22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause :
 Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee all the day.</p> <p>23 Forget not the voice of thine adversaries :
 The tumult of those that rise up against thee ascendeth continually.</p> |
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THE title mentions Asaph as the author. But it cannot be the elder Asaph, who was contemporary with David. For the description here given cannot apply to any event earlier than the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans, recorded in 2 Chron. 36 : 19. To this period it is assigned by De Wette, Hengstenberg, Hupfeld, Moll. But in several important particulars it does not correspond with the historic details of the Chaldean invasion, especially in vs. 3, 4, 8, 9. Olshausen, Hitzig, and Delitzsch connect it with the atrocities of the Syrian invasion under Antiochus Epiphanes, B.C. 167. The only objection lies in v. 7, which is taken to mean that the temple was utterly destroyed, which is not in accordance with the historic statement in the Books of the Maccabees. Yet the porch of the temple was burned 2 Macc. 1 : 8), and the whole interior so thoroughly stripped and desecrated (1 Macc. 1 : 21-

24) that they cried to God in their misery, "Behold, our sanctuary and our beauty and our glory are laid waste, and the heathen have profaned them!" (1 Macc. 2 : 12). It is one of the most spirited and graphically descriptive Psalms in the Psalter, and its appeals to God, referring to past interventions of His Almighty power in behalf of Israel, are magnificent. *De Witt.*

This Psalm and the seventy-ninth both refer to the same calamity, and were, it may reasonably be conjectured, written by the same author. Both Psalms deplore the rejection of the nation, the occupation of Jerusalem by a foreign army, and the profanation of the sanctuary; but the seventy-fourth dwells chiefly on the destruction of the temple; the seventy-ninth on the terrible slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Assuming that both Psalms refer to the same event, we have to choose between two periods of Jewish history and only two, to which the language of the sacred poet could reasonably refer. The description might apply either to the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, or to the insolent oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes; and with one or other of these two occasions it has been usually connected. No presumption can be raised against the latter of these dates from the history of the canon; and there are, more particularly in this Psalm, some expressions which are most readily explained on the supposition that it was composed in the time of the Maccabees. On the whole, I incline to think that this Psalm may be most naturally explained by events that took place at that time. P.—Since nearly everything in both Psalms fits in with the Maccabean period, we base both Psalms upon the situation of the Jewish people under Antiochus and Demetrius. Their purport coincides with the prayer of Judas Maccabæus in 2 Macc. 8 : 1-4. D.

There is one singularity in this Psalm which reminds one strongly of Psalm 44; there is not one mention of national or personal sin throughout, no allusion to the Lord's righteous dealing in their punishment, no supplication for pardon and forgiveness; and yet one can hardly doubt that the writer of the Psalm, be he who he may, must have felt as keenly as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other prophet of the captivity, the sins and iniquities which had brought all this sore evil upon them. But still, though there be expostulation, there is no complaint; though there be mourning, there is no murmuring; there is far more the cry of a smitten child, wondering and grieving that his father's face is so turned away from him in

displeasure, and a father's hand so heavy on the child of his love. Or, as we might almost say, it is like the cry of one of those martyred ones beneath the altar, wondering at the Lord's continued endurance of His heritage thus trampled under foot of the marauder and oppressor, and exclaiming, "How long, O Lord, how long?" *Bouchier.*

1. Sheep of Thy pasture. A favorite figure in those Psalms which are ascribed to Asaph. The name contains in itself an appeal to the compassion and tender care of the shepherd. Can the shepherd slay his sheep? P.

2. "Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased of old." What a mighty plea is redemption. O God, canst Thou see the blood-mark on Thine own sheep, and yet allow grievous wolves to devour them? The Church is no new purchase of the Lord; from before the world's foundation the chosen were regarded as redeemed by the Lamb slain; shall ancient love die out, and the eternal purpose become frustrate? The Lord would have His people remember the Paschal Lamb, the bloodstained lintel, and the overthrow of Egypt; and will He forget all this Himself? Let us put Him in remembrance, let us plead together. Can He desert His blood-bought and forsake His redeemed? S.

3-7. This is his greatest grief. His country has been laid waste with fire and sword, his friends slain or carried into captivity, but there is no thought so full of pain as this, that the holy and beautiful house wherein his fathers worshipped has been plundered and desecrated by a heathen soldiery. Instead of the Psalms, and hymns, and sacred anthems which once echoed within those walls, has been heard the brutal shout of the fierce invaders, roaring like lions (such is the meaning of the word in the next verse) over their prey. Heathen emblems, military and religious, have displaced the emblems of Jehovah. The magnificent carved work of the temple, such as the cherubims, and the palms, and the pillars, with pomegranates and lily-work which adorned it, have been hewed down as remorselessly as a man would cut down so much wood in the forest. And then that splendid pile, so full of sacred memories, so dear to the heart of every true Israelite, has been set on fire, and left to perish in the flames. Such is the scene as it passes again before the eyes of his mind. P.

Their cities had been laid waste, their provinces, their farms, their vineyards, their oliveyards. They themselves had been everywhere cut down without striking a blow in defence,

and their means of life had been snatched away without resistance. Yet they speak not of these things, because those things which threatened the extinction of religion and the worship of God, overtopped the feeling of all these other misfortunes with an intolerable sorrow. *Musculus.*

4. The word *signs* does not necessarily denote either military or religious ensigns, but rather signifies in general the insignia of sovereignty. For all that once marked the presence and authority of God the impious enemy had substituted the signs or tokens of their own ascendancy. In other words, they had usurped God's place in His very sanctuary, the spot which He had chosen for His earthly residence. A.

5. This verse does not describe the preparation once made for building the temple, by hewing down cedars in the forest of Lebanon, but it compares the scene of ruin in the interior, the destruction of the carved work, etc., to the wide gap made in some stately forest by the blows of the woodman's axe. (See the use of the same figure, Jer. 46 : 22.)

8. *All the houses of God in the land;* literally, "all the assemblies," which must here mean "places of assembly," as in v. 4. The work of devastation does not stop short with the temple. The plain meaning of the words is, that there were many other places for religious worship in the land beside the temple, and that these, as well as the temple, were destroyed. Even before the exile there must have been buildings where it was customary to meet, especially on the Sabbath, and to pray, turning toward Jerusalem. There must surely have been some public worship beyond the limits of the family, and if so, places, houses, for its celebration. If, however, the Psalm be of the age of the Maccabees, there is no difficulty, for before that time there can be little doubt synagogues were established. P. — The words point to places for religious assemblies, to houses of God, *i.e.*, to synagogues — a weighty argument in favor of the Maccabean origin of the Psalm. D.

The existence of such places before the Babylonish captivity has been much disputed; and most writers, arguing from the silence of the Old Testament, incline to the opinion that they originated in Babylon, and that after the restoration similar oratories were opened in the land of Israel; and hence some infer that the seventy-fourth Psalm, which says in the eighth verse, "*They have burned up all the synagogues in the land,*" was written in the post-Babylonian times.

The argument from silence is, however, far from conclusive. The translation *synagogues*, might fairly lead to a similar translation in some other passages which were confessedly written before the captivity; and the circumstances, character, and necessities of the Israelites, the great body of whom were far removed from the temple, prove indisputably that in their towns and villages they must have had some locality where they assembled on their Sabbaths, new moons, and other solemn days, for the purpose of receiving instruction in the law, and for public prayer. That locality, however different from subsequent arrangements, was the origin of the *synagogue*. How such assemblies were conducted before the captivity it is now impossible to say. *M'Cauley.*

10. "How long, O Lord, how long!" was heard daily during the two centuries of African slavery and the slave trade. The feudal system, the corn laws, Russian serfdom, religious persecution, barbarous laws and penalties, and a score of systems of traditional savagery, all in the midst of Christian peoples, have survived for centuries, and then were only thrown off by the most determined and violent efforts. Every kind of transformation is slow, as measured by human time—but rapid enough when put in the measure of endless duration. Religion and reform are no exceptions. They are of slow growth and slow to decay—but each new manifestation of the living principle, which never grows weary or infirm or death-stricken, is higher and nobler than that which went before. From our dead ashes another generation will draw greater strength and refinement and purity. Nothing that we do for righteousness' sake is lost either to us personally, or to our race. Nothing is lost. God knows what He is doing, and how all things work to the consummation of His splendid designs. *Interior.*

11. How bold is the suppliant! Does he err? Nay, verily, we who are so chill and distant, and listless in prayer are the erring ones. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and he who learns the art shall surely prevail with God by its means. It is fit that we should inquire why the work of grace goes on so slowly. When God seems to fold His arms we must not fold ours, but rather renew our entreaties that He would again put His hand to the work. We have here a model of pleading; humble, but very bold, eager, fervent, and effectual. The heart of God is always moved by such entreaties. When we bring forth our strong reasons, then will He bring forth His choice mercies. S.

12-17. The pleader now draws comfort by looking back into the time when God as Israel's King unfolded in saving deeds the richness of His salvation everywhere upon the earth, where Israel's existence was imperilled; not only within the compass of the Holy Land, but also, *e.g.*, within that of Egypt. It is really Egypt that he has present to his mind, for there now follows first of all a glance at the historical (vs. 13-15) and then at the natural (vs. 16, 17) exhibitions of God's power. D.

13-15. Appropriately the song reverts to the glorious works of God at the Red Sea, through the Arabian desert, and at the passage of the Jordan. "By Thy power Thou didst cleave the sea asunder; Thou didst shiver to atoms the heads of the great sea-monsters—said apparently to celebrate God's absolute dominion over the sea and its mighty populations." "Leviathan;" literally, a crooked serpent, but used like "dragon" for the largest class of sea animals. The poet represents the mighty hand of God at the Red Sea as shattering all the huge sea-monsters, and tossing them up upon the farther shore to become meat for the people dwelling there; but really it would seem with his eye on that proud host—Egypt's horsemen and charioteers—sunk in its mighty waves and their dead carcasses washed upon the desert shore. "Thou didst cleave fountain and flood," with probable allusion to the cleaving of the rocks under the rod of Moses, out of which waters ran as a river. "Thou driedst up mighty rivers," looks to the passage of the Jordan. The word for "mighty" denotes rather a living, perennial stream, never naturally dry. Such was the Jordan, and moreover at the time of this miracle, at high flood, overflowing all its banks. These wonderful achievements of their Almighty King were good to think of in such seasons of sorrow and despondency as that of the writer of this Psalm and of His people. C.

15. (It is) *Thou (that) didst cleave fount and flood (that) didst dry up rivers ever-flowing.* Fountain and flood is a kind of proverbial expression for smaller and greater bodies of water. The primary historical allusion here is to the passage of the Jordan. The original construction of the last phrase is *streams of perpetuity*, perennial or unfailing streams, as distinguished from the winter torrents of the Holy Land, which disappear in summer. A.

16, 17. From the wonders wrought by God on behalf of His people in their history, the poet rises to the wider view of His ever-continued, ever-displayed power and majesty in

the world of nature. The miracle does not lead him to forget God's power and goodness in that which is not miraculous. The one is rather a witness to, and an instance of, the other. P. —The God of Israel, who gave proof of Himself thus marvellously in history, is also the Creator and Lord of every created thing. Day and night and the luminaries of both are His creatures. D.

16. Day. Night. These changes are *according to a fixed law*. Day and night are the ordinances of heaven upon earth for the growth of earth's life, and, if we could trace the sunshine and the dark in every follower of God, we should see them arranged with equal wisdom. It is a more complex work, but be sure of this, there is order in it all, and the hand that rules the world in its orbit, and that makes it fulfil its course through light and shade, is governing our lives for a higher than earthly end. *It is a law of alternation.* It is day and night, and, let us thank God, it is also in due time night and day. Each has its time and use. *Ker.*

He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve this course of nature by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with Him nothing is impossible, nor any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. He that is faithful to His covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good His promise to His people, and never cast off those whom He has chosen (Jer. 31:35, 36; 33:20, 21). His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons (Gen. 8:21). Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature, throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other than that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity should be, in like manner, counterchanged in all the borders of the Church. We have as much reason to expect affliction as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort than we have to despair of day and summer. H.

17. *Thou hast set (or established) all the bounds of earth; summer and winter—Thou hast formed them.* This is the seventh emphatic repetition of the pronoun *thou*. The description of God's power over nature is completed by referring to it the revolution of the seasons as not only appointed but created by Him. He is not only the ordainer of the change itself, but the author of the causes which produce it. A.

Thou hast set all the borders of the earth.

The actual distribution of sea and land over the surface of the globe is of the highest importance to the present condition of organic life. If the ocean were considerably smaller, or if Asia and America were concentrated within the tropics, the tides, the oceanic currents, and the meteorological phenomenon on which the existence of the vegetable and animal kingdoms depend, would be so profoundly modified, that it is extremely doubtful whether man could have existed, and absolutely certain that he could never have risen to a high degree of civilization. The dependence of human progress upon the existing configuration of the globe necessarily leads us to the conclusion that both must be the harmonious work of the same Almighty power, and that a Divine and immutable plan has from all eternity presided over the destinies of our planet. It is almost superfluous to point out how largely the irregular windings and undulations of the coasts, the numerous islands scattered over the face of the waters, the promontories stretching far away into the domains of the sea, and the gulfs plunging deeply into the bosom of the land, have contributed to the civilization of the human race by multiplying its points of contact with the ocean, the great highway of nations. *G. Hartwig.*

Thou hast made summer. One of the chiefest charms of summer is its fulness. And in this fulness is its peace. Summer has the deep consciousness of fruitfulness. It knows it has done its work ; it rejoices in its own fulness and wealth. Man's content is in looking back and seeing that his beginning of things has now been led on to some fulfilment, however small, in having accomplished something of his aspiration, in producing some fruit. The real looking forward we should have, the real aspiration, is that which the summer has ; and it is one of content, not of discontent. It is the looking forward to harvest, and it is founded on faith, which has its root in the fact that work has been already done. We believe in a harvest of our life, because the fields we have sown are whitening already for harvest. There is another contentment that summer images : it is the contentment of rest. The earth rests from her labor, and her works do follow her. There is only one way to win something of God's peace. It is to learn the lesson nature gives us of daily self-forgetfulness. Content is its reward. It is the lesson summer gives and the reward she wins. Fruitfulness will follow on faith and love, and with fruitfulness there

will be content ; the deep content of duties fulfilled, of aspirations growing into fulfilment, of moral power secured. That is the summer life of the soul.

Thou hast made winter. Winter, and the snow, which is its universal exponent, is in truth one of the most efficient causes of civilization, and of the advancement of mankind, not only in the arts and comforts of life, and in power over the elements, but in mental and even moral development and progress. It is out of privation, difficulty, and disadvantage that the good, both temporal and spiritual, of our race grows ; our progress is gained only by the stimulus of want, the compulsion of necessity. If there had been a genial summer clime the world round, or only the alternation of spring, summer, and autumn, mankind would have remained in a state of comparative indolence and barbarism ; we should have been little better than cultivated animals. If we look round the world we see how almost all the true and permanent greatness of States and nations lies within the circle of a wintry zone. We find that those nations and races of the earth that have been nurtured in an indulgent summer clime and spontaneous abundance of nature all the year round, have had to borrow, or are now first receiving all their possessions of science, refinement, high knowledge, and moral and religious culture from the north. The apparent death of winter is the very bosom of the greatness of our life. In commerce, in the arts, in moral, economical, political, and social advancement we owe the greater part of our progress, and the whole world owes it, to the necessities impelling us, and the habitudes formed within us and upon us, by the various influences, immediate and secondary, of this vigorous season. *G. B. C.*

The moral benefit of winter is supereminently great in the contributions it makes to home-life, and the fine moral serenities of a close family state. Home is a northern word, not found in the languages of the tropical nations. It is only at the hearth where the winter fire is kindled and the family is gathered into close companionship, that fatherhood and motherhood, and the other tender relationships, become bonds of unity and consciously felt concern. There is no moral influence, not immediately religious, that is so essential to virtue and religion as this most untropical institution that we call home. *H. B.*

Winter drives us to our home. We make our life warm and bright within our walls. We forget the bitter days, save when we re-

member to give of our plenty to the poor and sorrowful. There are no times that may be happier than winter, if we will. We see in the frost-bound world the picture of death. Is there nothing but death there? Look beneath the surface of the earth, under the shroud of snow. Beneath the winding-sheet is, not death, but life in preparation, hidden, but in slow activity. The forces are being laid up which will be the green leaves of a thousand woods, the roses and lilies of a thousand gardens, the fountain rush of spring. That is what winter tells the man who knows. It is the story it tells also to the Christian, who has found and known the fatherhood of God. He has an inward life that refuses death. In the patient waiting and repose of a faithful age the spiritual forces which will make the form, and color, and power, and work of his coming life are gathering together into a store that waits but the touch of death to break into immortal energy. He will sleep beneath the snow, but it will be to awaken. *S. A. Brooke.*

The winter should, by the very circumstance of its unproductiveness, remind us of the care and bounty of Divine providence, in that other seasons are granted us which furnish supplies for this, and for the whole year. The winter has a character of inclemency and rigor, has ideas and feelings associated with it of hardship, infelicity, suffering. In this it should excite thoughtful and compassionate sentiments respecting the distress and suffering that are in the world. Winter shows the transitory quality of the beauty, variety, magnificence, and riches which had been spread over the natural world. This consideration easily carries our thoughts to parallel things in human life. There may be a resemblance to winter in the state of the mind in respect to its best interests. And truly the winter in the soul is worse than any season and aspect of external nature. Observe here one striking point of difference: the natural winter will certainly and necessarily, from a regular and absolute cause, pass away after awhile; not so the spiritual winter. It does not belong to the constitution of the human nature that the spiritual warmth and animation *must* come, *must* have a season. Note the resemblance of winter to old age. The old age of the wise and good resembles the winter in one of its most favorable circumstances—that the former seasons improved have laid in a valuable store; and they have to bless God that disposed and enabled them to do so. But the most striking point in the comparison is one of unlikeness. Their winter has no spring to follow it—in this

world. But the servants of God say, “*That is well!*” There is eternal spring before them. What will they not be contemplating of beauty and glory while those who have yet many years on earth are seeing returning springs and summers? *J. Foster.*

Winter is not death, but sleep. The white cover of the snow is not a shroud for the dead, but a warm cloak hiding away a life that is to spring up after a time. Death and sleep have some points of likeness. But how unlike are they!—the cold, unmoving rigidity of the one, the softly breathing stillness of the other—the one to wake no more on earth, the other to rise in the dawn of the new day, refreshed for further work. Winter is sleep, not death. The seeds are covered up in the earth, the buds are folded with inimitable art in their russet cases, the streams “are lost amid the splendid blank” of the snow and ice, in whose chains all the world is bound. But, hidden away thus, is all the life of the coming year. *J. A. Camden.*

18-23. Now that the Psalmist has thus fortified himself by the contemplation of the power of God, which He has manifested as Redeemer in behalf of His own people and as Creator in behalf of the whole human family, he rises anew to prayer, but so much the more confidently and boldly.

19. The Church, which it is a custom of the Asaphic Psalms to designate with emblematical names taken from the animal world, finds itself like sheep among wolves, and seems to itself as if forgotten by God. The cry of prayer is raised out of a situation such as that of the Maccabees was. *D.*

Thy turtledove. God’s people are an harmless, innocent people, altogether unable and insufficient to help themselves against their enemies, who are numerous, cruel, and barbarous. Hence they are resembled to sheep, doves; called in the Word, fatherless, orphans, little ones, babes, poor, simple, needy. *Langley.*—How weak soever the Church be, and how many and strong soever the enemy be, yet cannot they all devour the Church, except the Lord should deliver His Church over into their hands, against which evil the Church hath ground of confidence to pray, “*O deliver not the soul of Thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked;*” for He hath given His Church wings, and a hiding-place too, as the comparison importeth, if He please to give her the use thereof also. *Dickson.*

20. *Look upon the covenant.* The appeal lies to that, not to anything in the Psalmist himself, or in his people. “*This,*” says Tholuck,

"is the everlasting refuge of the saints of God, even in the greatest dangers. And even if they have broken it, can the unbelief of men make the truth of God of none effect?" The covenant is that made first with Abraham, and then renewed with him and with the fathers. P. —Here is the master-key—heaven's gate must open to this. His covenant He will not break, nor alter the thing that hath gone forth out of His lips. The Lord had promised to bless the seed of Abraham, and make them a blessing; here they plead that ancient word, even as we also may plead the covenant made with the Lord Jesus for all believers. What a grand word it is! S.

Have respect unto the covenant.

This presseth the Lord more than the former, for it lays hold on God's faithfulness, and truth, and fatherly goodness. If they be not in covenant with God, it may be charged upon them, "You have violated My holy law, you have incensed My wrath against you by your perverse ways, therefore I will not help you, but give you up;" but now the souls that be in covenant with God will not be put off so (be it spoken with holy reverence), but will cry out, O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, yet "*have respect unto Thy covenant.*" Yet be sure you walk uprightly before the Lord.
Langley.

PSALM LXXV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; SET TO AL-TASHHETH. A PSALM OF ASAPH, A SONG.

- 1 We give thanks unto thee, O God,
We give thanks, for thy name is near:
Men tell of thy wondrous works.
- 2 For I will take a set time,
I will judge uprightly.
- 3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are
dissolved:
I have set up the pillars of it. [Selah]
- 4 I said unto the arrogant, Deal not arrogantly:
And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn.
- 5 Lift not up your horn on high;
Speak not with a stiff neck.
- 6 For neither from the east, nor from the
west,

- Nor yet from the south, *cometh* lifting up.
- 7 But God is the judge:
He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.
- 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup,
and the wine foameth;
It is full of mixture, and he poureth out of
the same:
Surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of
the earth shall drain them out, and
drink them.
- 9 But I will declare for ever,
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
- 10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut
off;
But the horns of the righteous shall be lifted
up.

THIS Psalm is probably to be referred to the defeat of the Assyrians under Sennacherib before Jerusalem (2 Kings 19). Hengstenberg regards it "as the lyrical accompaniment of Isaiah's prophecies in view of impending destruction by the Assyrians, and as the evidence of the living faith with which God's people received His promise." *De Witt.*

The Psalm celebrates in prophetic strain the righteous judgment of God. The voice of God Himself from heaven declares His righteousness, announces to the world that He is not, as human impatience has ever been wont to deem,

regardless of wrong and suffering; but that He only waits for the moment which to His infinite wisdom seems best, that He may chastise the insolence of evil-doers. There are no clearly marked historical allusions in the Psalm. It seems, however, not improbable, as has been conjectured by many commentators (Ewald, Tholuck, Delitzsch, etc.), that it may refer to the time of the Assyrian invasion, either as celebrating, or immediately anticipating, the defeat of Sennacherib.

The Psalm opens with the ascription of praise which God's wonders, now and in all

past time, have called forth (v. 1). It passes then to the prophetic announcement of the truth which has been uttered from heaven and echoed with triumph upon earth, of God's righteous judgment (vs. 2-8). Finally, it concludes with a determination to publish the praise of Jehovah forever, while the same prophetic strain of triumph is heard as in one last echo repeating itself (vs. 9, 10). P.

TITLE. *To the chief musician. Al-tashketh. A Psalm by Asaph. A song (of praise).* In this Psalm the ancient Church expresses a confident anticipation of Divine assistance and deliverance from the domination of some great hostile power, the catastrophe of which is here foretold. The immediate historical occasion we have no direct means of determining; but the one to which the Psalm itself seems most appropriate is the destruction of the Assyrian host in the reign of Hezekiah. A.

1, 2. The connection between these verses is not, at first sight, very obvious. It may, perhaps, be traced as follows: First, the Psalmist blends in one the past and the present. God has been, and is now, the object of Israel's praise; as He has both in the past and in the present displayed His wonders on their behalf. Then He abruptly cites the words of God, words whose fulfilment he had just witnessed, or whose approaching fulfilment he saw in the spirit of prophecy, words that were themselves an exemplification of the truth that God is near despite the madness of men and the disorders of the world. P.

1. The clause, "Thy name is near," is a fine illustration of the Hebrew usage of the word "name" to represent the special manifestations of God to men in the line of His power, wisdom, and love, here expressively grouped under the phrase, "Thy wonderful works." The last part of the verse, more closely translated, might stand: "Thy name is near; Thy wondrous works declare it;" or possibly thus: They (men in general) declare Thy wondrous works. God is so near, manifests Himself so openly and so signally that His glorious works are on every tongue; or those works themselves are both lip and tongue to declare it. Nothing less than this could fitly represent the prevalent feeling of the sons and daughters of Jerusalem when they arose one morning to find one hundred and eighty-five thousand dead corpses where but the night before lay the proud host of Assyria's king—the spoil strewn over the country along their retreating path and the survivors of that host gone, never to return! Did they not feel deep in their heart that not

their own hand but God's hand had done this? Ah, indeed, His name on that eventful night was *near*! His wondrous works told it too plainly to be misunderstood. C.

2. *For I will take a set time; I will equitably judge.* The best interpreters are now in favor of explaining these as the words of God Himself, containing the promise upon which was built the hope expressed in the preceding verse. *Take* then includes the two ideas of choosing and using for the end proposed. In the word translated *set time*, the idea of constituted time is predominant. As if he had said, I will appoint a time, and when it comes, I will ascend the judgment-seat. The parties to be tried are the foes and oppressors of God's people. The pronoun is emphatic; I, and no other, will be judge. A.

2, 3. The exact thought is better thus: "For I will take a set time; I will judge righteously. The land and all the dwellers in it are panic-stricken; I have adjusted the pillars thereof." That is, I will assign a time for manifesting My royal prerogative of judging the nations; then I will judge them in righteousness. C.

God is abruptly introduced as the speaker. The oracle is thus given as from the mouth of God Himself, to those who may be in doubt or perplexity because their lot is cast in troublous times. *When the set time is come*; literally, "When I shall have taken (reached) the set time," *i.e.*, the time appointed in the Divine counsels. The thread of time is ever running, as it were, from the spindle, but at the critical moment God's hand arrests it. God is ever the righteous Judge, but He executes His sentence, not according to man's impatient expectations, but at the exact instant which He has chosen. Such a critical moment is the present. The world itself seems "utterly broken down and clean dissolved," but He who once built it up like a stately palace, still stays its pillars with His hand. The natural framework and the moral framework are here identified. To the poet's eye, the world of nature and the world of man are not two, but one. The words of Hannah's song (1 Sam. 2:8) furnish an exact parallel: "For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, and He hath set the world upon them"—language which, as the context shows, has a moral application. P.

4-7. The course of thought is, Throw not your horn proudly in the air as if your power were supreme, and the destinies of all earth's nations were in your hand; for the decision of destinies comes neither from the east nor west,

nor from the glorious old mountains of the region of Sinai, but God only and alone is judge—the sole and Almighty Arbiter of human destiny. C.

6. For. The poet himself speaks, taking up and applying to himself and to others the Divine sentence which he had just been commissioned to deliver. Glory and power come not from any earthly source, though a man should seek it in every quarter of the globe, but only from God, who lifteth up and casteth down, according to His own righteous sentence. *From the south*, the great wilderness lying in that direction. Thus three quarters are mentioned, the north only being omitted. This may be accounted for, supposing the Psalm to refer to Sennacherib, by the fact that the Assyrian army approached from the north; and therefore it would be natural to look in all directions but that for assistance to repel the invader. *Lifting up*. The word is evidently an emphatic word in the Psalm; it is the same which occurs in vs. 4 and 5, and again in vs. 7 and 10. “Lifting up,” in its Hebrew sense, does not mean “promotion,” as we commonly understand it, but deliverance from trouble; safety; victory. The image, in particular, of lifting up the head or the horn (the last, borrowed from wild beasts, in which the horn is the symbol of strength), denotes courage, strength, victory over enemies. P.

7. God is the Judge, the Governor or Umpire; when parties contend for the prize He *puts down one and sets up another*, as He sees fit, so as to serve His own purposes and bring to pass His own counsels. Herein He acts by prerogative, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters; nor is it any damage, danger, or disgrace that He who is infinitely wise, holy, and good has power to set up and put down whom and when and how He pleases. H.

The rise and fall of nations and empires are in this Psalm ascribed to God. He exalts one and puts down another at His pleasure. In this He generally uses instrumentality, but that instrumentality is always rendered effectual by His own agency. When nations or individuals are prosperous and powerful, they usually ascribe all to themselves or to fortune. But it is God who has raised them to eminence. When they boast He can humble them. In these verses God is considered as the governor of the world, punishing the wicked and pouring out judgments on His enemies. The calamities of war, pestilence, and famine are all ministers of providence to execute wrath. *A. Carson.*

8. The meaning is that they shall have nothing

left for it, no resource or alternative, except to drain the cup to the very dregs, *i.e.*, to suffer God's wrath to the uttermost. The position given to the subject of the sentence at its close makes it more emphatic. **A.**—The dregs of the cup all the wicked of the earth will be compelled to drink out; they may not drink and put down the cup, but they must drink it out with involuntary avidity even to the last drop (Ezek. 23 : 34). We have here the primary passage of a figure which is worked out by the prophets in an ever grander manner. D.

Here is an eternal truth with which we would not part: God must hate sin and be forever sin's enemy. Because He is the Lord of love, therefore must He be a consuming fire to evil; God is against evil, but for us; if, then, we sin He must be against us; in sinning we identify ourselves with evil, therefore we must endure the consuming fire. Oh, brethren, in this soft age in which we live it is good to fall back on the first principles of everlasting truth. We have come to think that education may be maintained by mere laws of love instead of discipline, and that public punishment may be abolished. We say that these things are contrary to the Gospel; and here, doubtless, there is an underlying truth: it is true that there may be a severity in education which defeats itself, it is true that love and tenderness may do more than severity; but yet under a system of mere love and tenderness no character can acquire manliness or firmness. When you have once got rid of the idea of public punishment, then by degrees you will also get rid of the idea of sin: where is it written in the Word of God that the sword of His minister is to be borne in vain? In this world of groaning and of anguish, tell us where it is that the law which links suffering to sin has ceased to act? *F. W. Robertson.*

9. But as for me—placing himself and the congregation of Israel in opposition to the proud oppressors—I will be the everlasting herald of this great and memorable act. This is the true *Non omnis moriar*.

10. Triumphantly in this last verse he claims, for himself and for the Church, a share in the signal act of deliverance. That which God threatens (vs. 4, 5), He accomplishes by the hand of His servants. Every horn of worldly power must fall before Him. Ewald sees an emphasis in the word *all*, repeated v. 8 and here. The punishment is, as yet, only begun. Some only have drunk of that deadly wine, but the cup is large, and *all* the wicked must drain it. P.

PSALM LXXVI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF ASAPH, A SONG.

- 1 IN Judah is God known :
His name is great in Israel.
- 2 In Salem also is his tabernacle,
And his dwelling place in Zion.
- 3 There he brake the arrows of the bow ;
The shield, and the sword, and the battle.
[Selah]
- 4 Glorious art thou *and* excellent, from the
mountains of prey.
- 5 The stouthearted are spoiled, they have
slept their sleep ;
And none of the men of might have found
their hands.
- 6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both chariot and horse are cast into a dead
sleep.

- 7 Thou, even thou, art to be feared .
And who may stand in thy sight when once
thou art angry ?
- 8 Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from
heaven ;
The earth feared, and was still,
- 9 When God arose to judgment,
To save all the meek of the earth. [Selah]
- 10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee :
The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon
thee.
- 11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God :
Let all that be round about him bring pres-
ents unto him that ought to be feared.
- 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes :
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

THIS Psalm follows Psalm 75 most appropriately. It is the consummation of the judgment there forecast, and throughout bears the impress of the same historic connection. Without this the preceding Psalm disappoints us by its incompleteness. For the self-manifestation of God in the illustration of His glorious Name at important crises in history, when all is lost without the aid of Almighty power, embraces both the announcement and the execution of His righteous judgment. This Psalm follows, as its companion precedes, the destruction of the Assyrian power. *De Witt.*

This is one of several Psalms which were composed in celebration of the miraculous overthrow of Sennacherib's army. From the days of Israel's first occupation of the land, when God went forth with their hosts, giving the victory by signs and wonders from heaven, no deliverance so signal had been witnessed. Hence it roused in an extraordinary degree the religious fervor of the nation, and called forth loud songs of thanksgiving. Like Psalms 46, 47, 48, this is an ode of victory over the Assyrians. It tells of Zion's glory and Zion's safety (to which there may be an allusion in the name *Salem*), because God has chosen it for His dwelling-place. It tells of the discomfiture of that proud army, whose might was weakness itself when arrayed against the might of Jehovah. It tells how the warriors sank into their last sleep before the walls of the city, not beaten

down before a human enemy, not slain by an earthly arm, but at the rebuke of the God of Jacob. And then the poet looks beyond the immediate scene. He beholds in this great deliverance not the power only, but the righteousness of God. It is God's solemn act of judgment. It is His voice speaking from heaven and filling the earth. And the lesson which this act of judgment teaches is the folly of man, who would measure his impotent wrath against the majesty of God ; and the wisdom of submission to Him who is the only worthy object of fear.

The Psalm consists of four strophes, each of which is comprised in three verses. The first celebrates Jerusalem and Zion as the abode of God, and the place where He has manifested His power (vs. 1-3). The second describes in a forcible and animated manner the sudden destruction of the beleaguering army (vs. 4-6). The third dwells on that event as a solemn, far-reaching act of judgment, conveying its lesson to the world (vs. 7-9). The last tells what that lesson is, counselling submission to Him whose power and whose righteousness have so wonderfully made themselves known (vs. 10-12). P.

1, 2. These opening sentences seem to go back to the first revelations of God's power and grace, by which He became established upon His throne in Zion. From Zion as the centre must go forth every new manifestation of His glorious majesty in behalf of Israel, the latest

of which is now celebrated in thankful song. *De Witt.*

His name is great in Israel, inasmuch as He has proved Himself to be a great One and is praised as a great One. In Judah more especially; for there in Jerusalem and indeed upon Zion, the citadel with the gates of old, He has His dwelling-place upon earth within Israel. Salem is the ancient name of Jerusalem; for the Salem of Melchizedek is one and the same city with Jerusalem of Adonizedek in Josh. 10: 1. D.

1. Well might it be said then, "In Judah is God known;" known as the hearer of prayer; known as the enduring, unfailing Friend of His covenant people; known as One mighty to save. "His name is great in Israel;" how could it be otherwise after such displays of matchless power and terrible retribution upon the proud Assyrian! C.—*In Judah*, in His Church, where His Word and ordinances are, where Christ is preached, and the mystery of man's salvation is opened, there God is known *truly* without error, *perspicuously* without obscurities, and *savingly* without uncertainties. *And His name is great in Israel*; His power, wisdom, truth, love, and goodness is much magnified and very glorious in their apprehensions who know Him in Christ Jesus. A. *Grosse.*

2. Salem is but another name for Jerusalem—the city of the Great King, the place of God's special abode, where first His tent and afterward His temple was located. Assyria's king had proudly hurled defiance at the God of Israel; in the words of Isaiah (10: 33), had "shaken his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem;" but the God who dwelt there sent forth His angel through that Assyrian camp one awful night—it was enough! The dwelling-place of Israel's God was safe! C.

2, 3. The care of Salem, or Zion, lies at the bottom of all God's powerful actings and workings among the sons of men. Every mighty work of God throughout the world may be prefaced with these two verses. The whole course of affairs in the world is steered by Providence in reference to the good of Salem. *Owen.*

3. *There*, at that point, just as that marshaled host thought themselves within striking distance and ready to smite the city—there Jehovah shivered the lightnings of the bow, the shield, the sword—all his implements of battle. Pause and think of that crash underneath the stroke of the Almighty! C.—Every weapon, offensive and defensive, the Lord dashed in

pieces. In the spiritual conflicts of this and every age, the like will be seen; no weapon that is formed against the Church shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against her in judgment, she shall condemn. "*Selah.*" It is meet that we should dwell on so soul-stirring a theme, and give the Lord our grateful adoration, hence a pause is inserted. S.

4. God goes forth victoriously from Zion to crush His foes. "The promise," Tholuck says, "is fulfilled: 'I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot' (Isa. 14: 25). Yea, upon the mountains of Jerusalem they themselves must become a prey who had hoped there to gather the prey." P.

5. **Slept their sleep.** The sleep of death, a figure which is peculiarly appropriate to the destruction of the Assyrian army in the dead of night. **None have found their hands.** This phrase is remarkable; it seems to represent a death which comes suddenly, yet with a momentary interval of consciousness; the sleeper, awakened by a sudden pang, endeavors in vain to put out his hands and grasp his weapons, but falls back overwhelmed by the deep sleep, which in the next verse is said to fall on chariot and horse, *i.e.*, the whole army of the invaders. *Cook.*—In v. 6 we see them lying in the last throes of death and making the last attempt to raise themselves up. But they do not find the hands, which they lifted up threateningly against Jerusalem; these are paralyzed, motionless, rigid and dead. This field of corpses is the effect of the omnipotent energy of the Word of the God of Jacob. Before His threatening both chariot and horse, equipage and chargers, have sunk into motionlessness and unconsciousness. D.

6. The sleep meant is of course the sleep of death. The application of this figure to the chariot as well as to the horse is less paradoxical in Hebrew, where the noun used is sometimes a collective meaning cavalry. At the same time there is beauty in the figure, as suggesting that the noisy rattle of the wheels is hushed in death-like silence. A.

7-9. The description of the effect of God's judgments upon the people is very striking; the tones are grave, solemn, speaking rather of awe than exultation; the only grace which the Psalmist claims for his people is meekness, a consciousness of weakness, and dependence on God's power. *Cook.*

7. **Thou, even Thou, art to be feared.** The emphasis in the word "*thou,*" redoubled, implies as much as if he had said,

Not principalities, not powers, not hell, not death, nor anything for themselves, but Thou, O Lord, alone art to be feared. Arguments and reasons to confirm it are two, here laid down in the text: the first is drawn from God's anger, who hath decreed and accordingly executes vengeance upon all the proud. The second is drawn from His power; not princes, not armies, not men, not angels are able to endure the breath of His fury; for, "*Who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?*" *Cragge.*

8. As in the last Psalm, God is spoken of as the Judge (this is a peculiar feature in the Psalms ascribed to Asaph); and, as in that, he speaks from heaven, terrifying His enemies with the thunder of His Word. P.

8, 9. From out of His high heavens God made the mandate for His judgments to be heard—judgments in the sense of visitations of destruction upon His defiant foes. Earth feared and hushed itself to silence before God's awful voice. It was to save the *meek* ones—meek in the twofold sense of pious and frail—the poor, dependent ones who cast themselves on their God for help. Pause and contemplate this wonderful interposition! C.

10. The meaning of the first clause appears to be that all the wrath and violence of man do but serve to bring out the attributes of God, and so display His glory; the second clause is more doubtful; our version gives a fair sense, God will put an end to all other outbursts of fury on the part of His enemies. This interpretation is defended by Calvin, Venema, Doederlein, and Dathe (who follow Kimchi), and it is supported by an analogous use of the original word in Arabic, Syriac, and in the Mishna. *Cook.*

For the wrath of man shall praise Thee (or acknowledge Thee); the remainder of wraths Thou shalt gird (about Thee). The very passions which excite men to rebel against God shall be used as instruments and means of coercion. And so complete shall be this process, that even the remnant of such passionate excitement, which might be expected to escape attention, will be nevertheless an instrument or weapon in the hands of God. A.—Man's wrath doth but praise God. With the remainder of man's wrath, his last impotent efforts to assert his own power, God girds Himself, puts it on, so to speak, as an ornament—clothes himself therewith to his own glory. Thus the parallelism of the two clauses is strictly preserved. The word *wrath* is in the plural, denoting either wrath of every kind, or wrath in its intensity. P.

The wrath of wicked men against the people

of God puts them upon many devices, in frustrating of which the wisdom of God and His care of His Church is illustrated. The wrath of wicked men impels them to many violent attempts to destroy the people of God, and so gives Him occasion to manifest His power in their defence. It makes them sometimes fit to be His instruments in correcting His people, and so He makes them that hate holiness promote it in His people, and them that intend the greatest hurt to do them the greatest good. So it serves much to adorn God's signal undertakings for His people in the world, and to manifest the glory of God's justice upon His people's enemies. *J. Warren.*

God can use the wrath of man to any extent for His own praise. No matter how fierce, no matter how extreme or desperate, the more the better for His purposes; He can so easily gird it on and make it the very sword of His righteous retribution upon His proud and maddened foes. And did not Jehovah gird about Him the utmost wrath of Assyria's king and use it as His sword for the terrific slaughter of that mighty host? Such examples fill every page of history. C.—God makes use of this great evil, "*the wrath of man,*" to make war on and destroy other great evils in the earth—He lets it go forth with His commission as a gigantic demolisher. One wicked nation has been made His avenger on the greater wickedness of another. Wars of conquest have been directed by Providence to break up a state of ignorance and barbarism, which seemed otherwise to have a principle of perpetuity. Furious invasions, iniquitous in their principle, and intended for no good, have had the effect of destroying monstrous tyrannies and direful superstitions. *J. F.*

This truth has bearings both wide and rich upon the relations of sin under the moral government of God. It shows plainly that God never can be alarmed by the presence of sin, lest it should get any considerable ascendancy in His universe. No matter though it rage and burn and goad itself into furious wrath, God knows His own resources. He understands how He cannot only arrest and curtail this mischief, but how He can even turn it to great and good account. These views of God's relations to sin should inspire a calm and patient trust in God amid the darkest scenes. C.

The elements of necessity and free will are reconciled in the higher power of an omnipresent Providence, that predestinates the whole in the moral freedom of the integral parts. Of this the Bible never suffers us to lose sight. The root is never detached from the ground.

It is God everywhere ; and all creatures conform to His decrees ; the righteous by performance of the law, the disobedient by the sufferance of the penalty. *Coleridge*.—The revelation of God in His Word as the God of providence is everywhere grand and solemn. It is grand beyond expression to behold God, as a sovereign God, ordering all things after the councils of His own will, to work the purposes of His own good pleasure, and to this end, even while leaving His creatures to the exercise of their own freedom as voluntary intelligent agents, yet overruling even the free will of His enemies for the accomplishment of His own will, out of evil itself ever bringing forth good, and causing even the sin and wrath in the hearts of the wicked to praise Him. It is the mighty, incomprehensible, and supreme prerogative of Jehovah alone to do this, and in the exercise of this prerogative all beings and things are made to do His bidding ; the believing and the loving by obedience and love, the unbelieving and rebellious by the sufferance of the penalty. But, oh ! what a difference it makes to the creature, whether the will of the great Creator be performed out of a loving, obedient, trusting, and praising heart, thus fixed by the very beatings and breathings of the heart, in the heart of heaven, in heaven's essential holiness and blessedness, wherever in all God's universe be the position in time and space ; or whether it be *accomplished* rather than *performed* by an unwilling, rebellious, distrustful, unloving, suffering heart, compelled, in the endurance of the penalty of God's violated law, to perform the last and only thing that remains whereby God can be glorified ; and thus, by the very elements of a transgressing soul, by the very breathings and beatings of a heart of sin and hate and suffering, wherever in all God's universe be the position in time and space occupied. *Cheever*.

Powerful as is the evil will of man, yet more powerful far is the will of the omnipotent God. Great as has been the misery and ruin which depraved man in every generation has wrought on the earth, far greater would these have been had not the might of Jehovah been continually interposed to stay the natural course of the corrupt heart. Had not His energies been ceaselessly put forth to frustrate the purposes of the sinful human soul and bring to nought its destructive counsels and efforts, earth had been a scene of unqualified wickedness and shameless guilt, of unmingled, unmitigated wretchedness, ruin, and woe. As we trace the events of human history, how signally does this appear ! B.

Thus far through the long, sad history, the glory of God has very much arisen from the display of His power in contest with human iniquity. How the human nature could come into such a state, and why the sovereign Lord of all things suffered it to do so, have been the fruitless inquiries of innumerable speculating minds—inquiries totally in vain. How such an awful fact is to answer ultimately a good end is a matter to be surrendered to the wisdom and power of an Infinite Mind. And methinks it is a glorious thing that there should be a Mind to which all this is no difficulty either to comprehend or to accomplish. For ourselves, all we can say is, that the universe is vast, that eternity is long ; and that it is perfectly conceivable that under such a government, acting and combining on such an immensity of space and duration, it is perfectly conceivable (though not the manner how) that so much evil may answer a glorious end. And no doubt the redeemed and holy spirits will hereafter have a revelation in part and by degrees of this great mystery. In the mean time, we clearly see God in opposition to man. And also we most clearly see that He is right. For wherein has He, through all ages, maintained this opposition ? What has He declared and acted against in man ? the things that we see and know to be in themselves pernicious and hateful—idolatry, disregard of true religion, delusion, all the destructive passions, all crime and vice, all injustice among men, oppression, rapacious selfishness, cruelty, fraud. And therefore it is right that He should gain to Himself glory, or "*praise*," in this opposition. It is not the praise or glory of a powerful tyrant, but of a most righteous Governor. Should He surrender to itself, let go from His jurisdiction a world that is careless of Him, alienated, irreligious, rebellious ? Should He give it up as a province of His dominion from which no tribute of honor can be gained, because it is averse to render Him such tribute ? Should He keep it in His great system, under a grand economy of nature and Providence, as a portion entirely waste, as a planet not belonging to His dominion ? May He not righteously extort by His power, from the very wickedness of His perverse subjects, a glory which their homage, their love, their obedience, will not yield Him ? And the whole spirit and avowal of His declarations is that He will do this. J. F.

III. This is the end. God has wrought His terrible act of judgment, but the first of a long series of judgments to be executed on the nations, unless by timely submission they acknowledge Him as their King. P.

PSALM LXXVII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; AFTER THE MANNER OF JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF ASAPH.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 I WILL cry unto God with my voice ;
Even unto God with my voice, and he will
give ear unto me.</p> <p>2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord :
My hand was stretched out in the night, and
slackened not ;
My soul refused to be comforted.</p> <p>3 I remember God, and am disquieted :
I complain, and my spirit is overwhelmed.
[Selah]</p> <p>4 Thou holdest mine eyes watching :
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.</p> <p>5 I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.</p> <p>6 I call to remembrance my song in the
night :
I commune with mine own heart ;
And my spirit made diligent search.</p> <p>7 Will the Lord cast off for ever ?
And will he be favourable no more ?</p> <p>8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever ?
Doth his promise fail for evermore ?</p> <p>9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious ?
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mer-
cies ? [Selah]</p> <p>10 And I said, This is my infirmity ;
<i>But I will remember the years of the right
hand of the Most High.</i></p> | <p>11 I will make mention of the deeds of the
LORD ;
For I will remember thy wonders of old.</p> <p>12 I will meditate also upon all thy work,
And muse on thy doings.</p> <p>13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary [<i>in
holiness</i>] :
Who is a great god like unto God ?</p> <p>14 Thou art the God that doest wonders :
Thou hast made known thy strength among
the peoples.</p> <p>15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy
people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. [Selah]</p> <p>16 The waters saw thee, O God ;
The waters saw thee, they were afraid :
The depths also trembled.</p> <p>17 The clouds poured out water ;
The skies sent out a sound :
Thine arrows also went abroad.</p> <p>18 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirl-
wind ;
The lightnings lightened the world :
The earth trembled and shook.</p> <p>19 Thy way was in the sea,
And thy paths in the great waters,
And thy footsteps were not known.</p> <p>20 Thou ledest thy people like a flock,
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.</p> |
|---|---|

THE third chapter of Habakkuk should be read with this Psalm, to which it contains frequent allusions, and of which it is in some sense a continuation. The Psalm can scarcely be an imitation, its purpose and unity forbid such a supposition ; but its spirit, and some phrases in it, may have so impressed themselves upon the national memory as to be repeated in later prophecy. The expressions in Habakkuk, which seem imitations of the Psalm, are fuller. G. H. S. J.

This Psalm is the record, first, of a sorrow long and painfully questioning with itself, full of doubts and fears, trying in vain to find in itself, or in the past, a light for the present ; and then, of the triumph over that sorrow by the recollection of God's love and power, as manifested in the early history of Israel. By

whom the Psalm was written, or to what period of the history it is to be referred, it is now impossible to say.

But whenever and by whomsoever the Psalm may have been written, it clearly is individual, not national. The allusions to the national history may indeed show that the season was a season of national distress, and that the sweet singer was himself bowed down by the burden of the time, and oppressed by woes which he had no power to alleviate ; but it is his own sorrow, not the sorrows of others, under which he sighs, and of which he has left the pathetic record. The Psalm falls naturally into two principal parts ; the first (vs. 1-9), containing the expression of the Psalmist's sorrow and disquietude ; the second (vs. 10-20), telling how he rose above them. P.

The prophet, oppressed with a heavy weight of affliction, pathetically describes the conflicts and internal contests to which he is subjected, before he is enabled to rise from the depths of woe to any degree of hope or confidence. In the character of a suppliant, he first pours forth his earnest prayers to the God of his hope. He next endeavors to mitigate his sorrows by the remembrance of former times; but this, on the contrary, only seems to aggravate his sufferings, by the comparison of his present adversity with his former happiness. Again, recollecting the different methods by which the Almighty seeks the salvation of His people, appearing frequently to frown upon those "in whom He delighteth;" reconsidering also the vast series of mercies which He had bestowed upon His chosen people; the miracles which He had wrought in their favor; in a word, the goodness, the holiness, the power of the great Ruler of the universe; with all the ardor of gratitude and affection, he bursts forth into a strain of praise and exultation (vs. 13-19). In this passage we are at a loss which to admire most, the ease and grace with which the digression is made, the choice of the incidents, the magnificence of the imagery, or the force and elegance of the diction. *Bishop Lowth.*

2, 3. It is no occasional petition hastily put up, but a struggle, like that of Jacob, through the livelong night. It is even a sorer conflict, for he has not found the blessing as Jacob did. He cannot be comforted. He would think of God, but even that thought brings him no strength; he looks within, and his sorrow deepens. *P.*

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. Days of trouble must be days of prayer; especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us we must seek Him, and seek till we find Him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation to shake off his trouble, but he sought God and His favor and grace. *My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not;* as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. *H.*—He was afflicted, but in his affliction he "remembered God." Whatever doubts he entertained as to his own condition and the favor of God toward him, yet of the Being, the power and wisdom of God, he never doubted. This faith, which in his utmost extremity he held fast, proved to be his sheet-anchor, and saved him from the shipwreck which the storms and tempests raised in his own breast seemed to threaten. *Bishop Sherlock.*

There are moments in the life of all believers

when God and His ways become unintelligible to them. They get lost in profound meditation, and nothing is left them but a desponding sigh. But we know that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with God when they cannot utter their sighs (Rom. 8: 26). *Tholuck.*—It is in the experience of the Divine life that doubts melt away or can be held in quiet expectancy of a solution, and that we approach gradually to the calm of those that rest beneath the altar. The thought of God that for a while brings trouble shall be made the source of hope, the pledge that all with you and with His universe shall be ordered to a happy end; and even here, amid the trouble and struggle of earth, He can put into the mouth some notes of the praise of heaven. *Ker.*

"*Selah*" doth admonish and stir up the reader or hearer to mark what was said before it; for it is a word always put after very notable sentences. *John Hooper.*

4. When thou canst not sleep with thine eyes, labor to see Him that is invisible; one glimpse of that sight is more worth than all the sleep that thine eyes can be capable of. Give thyself up into His hands, to be disposed of at His will. What is this sweet acquiescence but the rest of the soul? which if thou canst find in thyself thou shalt quietly digest the want of thy bodily sleep. *Bishop H.*

5, 6. The place of audible prayer is taken by quiet soliloquy; thinking over the matter he puts himself back into the days of old, the years of bygone times, which were so rich in proofs of the power and lovingkindness of the God who was then manifest, but who is now hidden; he calls to remembrance the better past of his people and of himself, inasmuch as now in the night he of set purpose calls back into his consciousness the time when joyous thankfulness impelled him to sing songs of praise. *D.*

If there are hours in our life when we know that there is a living God and an eternal world, it is in a crisis when we are compelled to cling to Him in the dark, and feel, as we cling, a strength beneath that lifts us up. It is then that God enters and heaven opens, and that we know what it is to have strength in weakness, and peace in trouble, and to bear a crushing load, and feel One bearing us. This is God's way of help, so good for us, so glorifying to Himself, and whenever it comes, in whatever degree, it is "his song in the night." The song in the night is not only this conscious feeling, it is the expression of it, to ourselves and others. It may not be loud—not even whis-

pered in words—bu' it is a resignation to the will of God, that is calm and sweet, that speaks often loudest when the lips are dumb. The song tells of a coming end to darkness, for there is prophecy in it, and wherever there is this deepest harmony—the heart at one with God in sorrow—the highest hope is never far away. If you search the history of God's dealings you will find that it has been His manner to give these songs in the deepest night to those who look to Him. In the time of Job He was known as "God our maker, who giveth songs in the night." Asaph remembered his "song in the night, when he communed with his heart;" and what are David's Psalms in trouble, but songs when God made "the very night to be light about him"? Paul and Silas found it in prison, when "they prayed and sang praises at midnight, and the prisoners heard them," for He in whom they trusted made His comforts come gliding like His own angels through the prison bars, till strange sounds of song, such as dungeons had not known before, came floating to the wondering listeners. In privation, in bereavement, in desertion, in death, these utterances of confidence in God are written down for us. In the night of trial He has filled the history of His Church as full of songs beneath as of stars of promise above. They console the hearts of the singers and they rise to join the songs of the morning stars, to announce that a ransomed company is marching through the gloom, anticipating the time when they too "shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." *Ker.*

6. *I commune with my own heart; my spirit made diligent search.* Make up your spiritual accounts daily; see how matters stand between God and your souls. Often reckonings keep God and conscience friends. Do with your hearts as you do with your watches, wind them up every morning by prayer, and at night examine whether your hearts have gone true all that day, whether the wheels of your affections have moved swiftly toward heaven. Call yourselves often to account; keep your reckonings even; that is the way to keep your peace. *Watson.*—The question is, what principle sets a-work? If it be an inward principle of life, out of a sincere affection and love to God and His ordinances, it argueth that man hath some life of grace; but if it be some wind that bloweth on him—the wind of State, the wind of law, the wind of danger, of penalty, the wind of fashion or custom—to do as his neighbors do; if these or the like be the things that draw him thither,

this is no argument of life at all; it is a dead piece of service. *Day.*

7-9. He gives himself up to musing "in his heart," *i.e.*, in retirement within his inmost nature, inasmuch as he allows his thoughts to range unceasingly to and fro between the present and the past, and consequently his spirit begins to make scruples, his temptation grows in intensity. There now follow the doubting questions of the tempted one. *D.*

Saints in all ages have experienced fluctuating frames. Doubt and uncertainty take place of knowledge and truth; unbelief seems to prevail against faith, and they are ready to call all in question; not only past sweet experiences of God's love to their souls, but the very existence of God's promises, faithfulness, and truth. And they write many false and bitter things against themselves. "Woe is me, I am undone," saith Isaiah. "Woe is me," saith Jeremiah. "Without were fightings, within were fears," say the apostles. And in this Psalm hope seems to be, as it were, giving up the ghost, and with languid, faint accents breathes, "Will the Lord cast off forever? will He be favorable no more? is His mercy clean gone forever? doth His promise fail forevermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?" So you see, O tossed, tempted, tried believer, this is the way saints in all ages have gone to glory. Thou hast thy lot with them now; soon thou also shalt be where they are. How comforting, how heart-reviving to know that the Lord, "who sent redemption unto His people, will ever be mindful of His covenant, which standeth fast forever"! *W. Mason.*

8. God's lovingkindness and God's promise are the two props of his faith. *P.*—Cast not away your confidence because God defers His performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backward and forward, you have a sure and faithful Word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbor such a thought within yourselves. The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time will be hastened in His time, which is always the best. *Cruso.*

9. In anger His tender mercies. The words are evidently placed with design in juxtaposition, in order to heighten the contrast. Compare Hab. 3:2, "In wrath remember mercy," where there is the same juxtaposition in the Hebrew. *P.*—Nay, verily, the Lord has *not* forgotten to be gracious, though He

sometimes seems to hide His face ; nor does He cease to rule the world, though He delays to interpose. The Father watches and preserves His child amid the fiercest fires of persecution ; and although the furnace of the trial through which he comes be heated seven times more than usual, every degree of heat is counted, measured, regulated by the Lord Himself. Though He permits injustice, and even lets it grow to an extraordinary height, He yet employs it for a purpose that may well command our adoration and regard—the purifying and the perfecting of those who are His own. He lets the wickedness of men increase for a brief period, that He may suddenly abase them all the more ; His words of comfort are withheld, just that, in His own time, He may speak far more forcibly by deeds. *Van O.*

10. *And I said, this is my affliction, the years of the right hand of the Highest.* This may be regarded as the turning-point of the entire composition. After all the repinings and misgivings just described, I said, at length, what I might and should have said before. *My affliction*, literally, *my sickness*, that specific form of suffering being put for suffering in general, as inflicted by the hand of God. The use of the word *years* seems to imply that the trial was one of long continuance. The Divine name or description (*Most High*) suggests the duty and necessity of yielding to His sovereign pleasure. *A.*

The thought is that the grief of the sufferer is intensified by the contrast between the present withdrawal of God's favor, and His wonderful works of grace and power in the past. Yet he finds his greatest comfort in recalling them, and cherishes the hope that God will be equally gracious in the present sore need. *De Witt.*—All this that I have been asking myself, and saddening myself with asking, seems impossible, and yet it is this very change which perplexes me. And then (v. 11) he recovers himself, and passes from self-contemplation to record God's wonders for His people. There recurs especially the one great deliverance never to be forgotten, the type and the pledge of all deliverances, whether of the nation or of the individual. On this he lays hold ; by this he sustains his sinking faith. *P.*

Despondency of spirit and distrust of God under affliction are too often the infirmities of good people, and as such are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the Psalmist here, *This is my infirmity*. When at any time it is working in us, we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil

spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the Psalmist here, *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High*. He had been considering the *years of ancient times* (v. 5), the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief ; but now he considered them as *the years of the right hand of the Most High*. That those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of His right hand, who is over all, God blessed forever, and this satisfied him ; for may not the Most High with His right hand make what changes He pleases ? *H.*

To how many of our thoughts, and feelings, and spiritual utterances may we apply these words : “ This is my infirmity ! ” Of hard thoughts of God, of dark views of His providence, of distrustful feelings toward God, and often of corresponding thoughts and feelings toward men, we may say, “ This is my infirmity.” And weakness of the body, faults in the spirit, and Satanic influence are the fountains and the causes of these utterances. The Psalmist resolves, as an antidote to despondency and fear, to bring the past and the present, recollections and existing consciousness, the day of his trouble and years of joyousness, the right hand of the Most High and his enemies and troubles—he resolves to bring them into comparison, to bring them together. “ I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” *S. Martin.*—Not the moments, nor the hours, nor days of a few short afflictions, that His left hand hath dealt to me, but the “ *years of His right hand ;* ” those long, large, and boundless mercies wherewith He hath comforted me. *T. Adams.*

It is the “ *infirmity* ” of a believer to be thinking of himself, and drawing false inferences (for *all* such inferences are necessarily erroneous) from what he sees or feels, as to the light in which he is beheld and estimated on the part of God. It is his *strength*, on the other hand, to remember the right hand of the Most High—to meditate upon the changeless truth and mercy of that God who has committed Himself in holiness to the believing sinner's sure salvation, by causing the Son of His love to suffer in our stead. *A. Pridham.*—Each one of us in all the roughnesses of the road which we have to pass over may, after first acknowledging our own infirmity, repose our minds on the thought of God's mercies to us in days gone by. *Bishop H. Goodwin.*

11. Remember Thy wonders. He does not mean to draw a distinction between

the *works* and the *wonders* of God ; but rather to state that all God's works are wonders. All, whether in providence or grace—all God's works are wonderful. If we take the individual experience of the Christian, it is all wonderful ! Wonderful that the Spirit should strive with man ; wonderful that God should bear with his backslidings ; wonderful that God should love him notwithstanding his pollution ; wonderful that God should persist in saving him in spite, as it were, of himself. Those who know anything experimentally of salvation through Christ, well know that the work is wonderful in its commencement, wonderful in its continuance, and they will need no argument to vindicate the transition from "*works*" to "*wonders*." *Melville*.

12. His remembrance of the sublime deeds of Jehovah's power and grace in the days of old will be prolonged and absorbing. He will *meditate*, will *muse* on these topics until they take possession of his soul and color all his thoughts and feelings. *Chambers*.—Meditation on Divine things makes them really profitable to us. In the mere apprehension of truth, whether through reading or hearing, there is little or no profit. The profit begins when that which is apprehended is so pondered as to become part and parcel of the man's inner nature ; just as food becomes of advantage to us when it is not only taken into the body but assimilated to it, and mixed with its substance. A man may run through a picture-gallery so as to see every painting it contains, and to derive from the sight a certain amount of pleasure ; but he alone *profits* by such an exhibition who pauses and studies each worthy work of art, and gathers ideas from it which enrich his mind, or learns lessons from it which refine his taste, or which may guide his own efforts after excellence in art. "It is the settling of milk," says an old writer, "that makes it turn to cream, and it is the settling of truth in the mind that makes it turn to spiritual nutriment." *W. L. Alexander*.

By meditation do we ransack our deep and false hearts, find out our secret enemies, buckle with them, expel them, arm ourselves against their re-entrance. By this we make use of all good means, fit ourselves to all good duties ; by this we desecrate all our weaknesses, obtain redress, prevent temptations, cheer up our solitariness, temper our occasions of delight, get more light into our knowledge, more heat to our affections, more life to our devotions. By this we grow to be—as we are—strangers upon earth ; and, out of a right estimation of all

earthly things, into a sweet fruition of invisible comforts. This alone is the remedy of security and worldliness, the pastime of saints, the ladder of heaven, and the best improvement of Christianity. *Bishop II.*—To set the crown on the head of the *duty of meditation*, add one thing over and above—let meditation be *carried up to admiration* ; not only should we be affected, but rapt up with the beauties and transcendencies of heavenly things ; act meditation to admiration, endeavor the highest pitch, as here the Psalmist in extolling the greatness and mercy of Jehovah. *N. Ranew*.

13. *O God, in holiness is Thy way. What Mighty (One) is great like God?* The common version, *in the sanctuary*, yields a good sense ; but the other is entitled to the preference on account of Ex. 15 : 11, to which place there is evident allusion. *Holiness* here means the Divine perfection, all that distinguishes the Maker from His creatures. *Thy way, i.e.*, Thy mode of dealing with Thy creatures, and particularly with Thy people. The use of the name *El* is again significant. Who is there like God, even among the mightiest and most exalted beings ? *A.*

Is holy ; literally, "is in holiness," not as others, "in the sanctuary," for the Psalmist, though speaking generally of God's redeeming love and power, is evidently thinking chiefly of the deliverance from Egypt, on which he afterward dwells. In this and the next verse there is an allusion to Ex. 15 : 11 : "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods ? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?" *P.*—This manifest allusion demands that the same word here should take the same sense as there. Moreover, it would be difficult to find any pertinent sense for the passage in these words—"Thy way is in the temple"—since the context refers to the glorious miracles wrought of God in the redemption of His covenant people. But nothing could be more pertinent than to say : Thy ways are altogether *holy*, wrought in pure and perfect holiness, *i.e.*, in supreme justice and benevolence—those great moral qualities which in their perfection distinguish the Infinite God from all the noblest creatures of earth. So also in greatness none can compare with Him. *C.*

14. Not only Israel, but Egypt, Bashan, Edom, Philistia, and all the nations had seen Jehovah's power. It was no secret in the olden time, and to this day it is published abroad. God's providence and grace are both full of displays of His power ; He is in the latter peculiarly conspicuous as "*mighty to save*."

Who will not be strong in faith when there is so strong an arm to lean upon? Shall our trust be doubtful when His power is beyond all question? S.

15. Thou hast redeemed. A word especially applied to the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. "The word 'redemption,' which has now a sense far holier and higher," says Dean Stanley, "first entered into the circle of religious ideas at the time when God 'redeemed' His people from the house of bondage." "

16-20. There follows now a description of the manner in which the redemption (v. 15) was accomplished in the passage of the Red Sea. In vs. 17, 18, the rain, the thunder and lightning, and the earthquake, are features of the scene not mentioned in the history in Exodus. Both Philo and Josephus add this circumstance in their narrative of the event. "The passage, as thus described," says Dean Stanley, "was effected, not in the calmness and clearness of daylight, but in the depth of midnight, amid the roar of the hurricane, which caused the sea to go back—amid a darkness lit up only by the broad glare of the lightning, as the Lord looked out of the thick darkness of the cloud." He then quotes these verses of the Psalm. This is one of those instances in which we obtain valuable incidental additions, by means of the psalmists and prophets, to the earlier narratives. P.

The poet describes it as if he were present: the waters convulsed to their very depths, the skies pouring out their streams, the earth quaking, the heavens gleaming and the thunder roaring. Amid such commotions in the world of nature, above and below, Jehovah marched through the sea, making a passage for His redeemed. His person and His working were invisible, but the result was manifest. The passage was accomplished safely. *Chambers.*

16. The waters saw Thee. The waters of the Red Sea are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility, as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when He commanded them to open a way and to form a wall on each side until His people were passed over. *Bishop Horne.*

18. The earth feared and became still, says Psalm 76: 9; *the earth trembled and shook,* says Psalm 77: 18. This common thought is the string upon which these two Psalms are strung. In general it may be said of this Psalm that the singer flees away from the sorrowful present

into the memory of the years of the days of old, and consoles himself more especially with the picture of the deliverance from Egypt, so rich in wonders. D.

It was only God marching along the sea and making His pathway in the great waters, when in His pillar of fire and cloud He led the way for the hosts of Israel through the sea. From this conception of God it was but an easy transition of thought to say that His footsteps leave no trace behind. How soon the waters close over those supposed foot-prints of the Almighty! So the majesty and glory of His mighty works, who shall fully comprehend? They are indeed ineffably glorious, and the thought of them lifts us up from our despondency and compels us to feel that if this great God is our Friend, we can have nothing to fear; if He be the God of Zion, then Zion is forever safe under His wing and strong in His power to save. C.

God's way is in the "sea." He walks *where we cannot always trace His footsteps.* God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then "*they are not known.*" But confidence in God Himself is always the strength of faith. *Anon.*—The book of Providence is not so easily read as that of Nature; its wisdom in design and perfection in execution are by no means as plain. Here God's way is often in the sea, His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known. But that is because the scheme of providence is not, like creation, a finished work. *Guthrie.*

There must be mystery in religion—a religion which lies between the finite and the infinite. Take away mystery, and we should tear out a page of evidence. But there is more hiddenness about the providence of God than there is about the grace of God. He has revealed much more clearly what He does and what He wills about our souls than about our bodies. As respects God's hidden ways, there are one or two things which we ought to consider. God never meant you to understand them. We are to seek the solution of hard problems, and the quelling of our fears, and the answer to our doubts, not in the events themselves, but in the character of God; not in the book of present history, but in the volume of the Scriptures. Faith has its helps. As we live on, many things which were once fearful, involved, and hard come out kind, simple, and plain; we

see, if not all, yet some of the reasons ; and we are satisfied where we were once most dissatisfied. The past stands sponsor for the future. J. V.

All that is mysterious is not true, but the highest truth, the truth of God's being and action revealed to the finite thought of man, is necessarily mysterious. It comes to us as we can bear it, shrouded beneath symbols and encased in formulæ. The true, living, incomprehensible Creator is mysterious even amid His largest and most condescending revelations ; and the created mind to which He discovers Himself knows full well that this very note of mystery marks the mighty interval which separates His infinity from its own finiteness. H. P. L.

We strive to know God by what He does. We question the import of events as they pass before us. We struggle to know why God does as He does here and now. This wild turmoil of earth, this conflict of good and evil, and this bearing down often of good by the evil, these sufferings which cover the earth as with a pall, these early and sudden deaths, this long delay to answer prayer, this slow advance of the kingdom of God, if it advance at all, these crushing woes that come upon portions of our race, this apparent indifference of God to them all—we stand up before these dark mysteries of God and question them ; but they are dumb, " They answer not again." " God's ways are in the sea, and His paths in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known." But whatever may be the cause why we know not now, we shall know hereafter if we trust here. The dark doings in God's providence will all be solved before or at the judgment of the great day. Up to that time neither the progress of the human soul, nor the light of heaven, nor the instruction of angels or of men made perfect, will make all the dark things light. That day will reveal them. We shall see that all that has happened to us has been designed to stimulate or to encourage us ; to wean us from earth and to draw us to heaven. The light of heaven itself will show us that God hath led us by a right, and by the best possible way to a city of habitation. Time is the night, eternity is the day of God. Let us trust Him where we cannot know. We shall know when it will be best to know. J. Drummond.

20. This verse stands in beautiful and touching contrast with the last. In that we have portrayed the majesty, the power, the unsearchable mystery of God's ways ; in this, His tender and loving care for His people, as that of a shepherd for his flock. P.

Thou leddest Thy people. The true philosophy of life is summed up here, in *simply following God*. Not that we ought not to make plans, nor to try to carry them out. Every earnest man will do that, only there is wisdom in holding our plans loosely, and subject to God's modification. Too often we are fettered by our plans ; our minds are bent on carrying out our life along those lines, and when God proceeds to change those lines, they are so rigid that there is a good deal of friction and pain attending the change. A plan assumes a future and involves forecast ; and forecast is just the point where we are weakest, and the future the very thing about which we are most uncertain. Therefore, as a matter of ordinary probability, our plans will change ; it is not to be supposed that we shall forecast the same things which Infinite Wisdom will forecast for us. It is wisdom to accept this fact, especially since we see it constantly illustrated in experience. V.

The closing verse is a sort of finale. Like a flock God led His people by Moses and Aaron to the promised goal. At this favorite figure, which is as it were the monogram of the Psalms of Asaph and his school, the poet stops, losing himself in the history of the redemption wrought in the days of old, a history which affords him great comfort and is to him a prophecy of the future that lies behind the bitter and grievous years of the present. D.

He says not, Moses and Aaron led the people of Israel, but, *Thou leddest the people*, and that *Thy people*, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Great was the power of these two men ; nevertheless neither of them was the shepherd of the sheep, but each was a servant to the one and only true Shepherd, to whom the sheep exclusively belonged. Nor yet was either the leader of the sheep, but the Shepherd Himself was present and led His own flock, to whom these two acted as servants. There are therefore three things to be learned from this passage : First, the sheep do not belong to the servants, but to the true Shepherd. Secondly, the true Shepherd is the leader of His own sheep. Thirdly, the office of Moses and Aaron was to attend to this duty, that the Lord's sheep should be properly led and pastured. So Christ Himself leads the sheep, His own sheep, and for this work He employs the ministry of His servants. *Musculus*.

The Psalmist has reached the climax of his strain, he has found relief from his sorrow by forcing his thoughts into another channel, by dwelling on all God's mightiest wonders of old ; but there he must end. There are seasons

when even the holiest faith cannot bear to listen to words of reasoning ; though it can still find a support whereon to rest, in the simple contemplation, in all their native grandeur, of the deeds that God hath wrought. *Thrupp.*

So ends the Psalm. The one great example is given, and that is enough. All is included in that ; and the troubled, desponding spirit has found peace and rest in the view of God's redemption. "He loses himself, as it were, in the joyful recollection." So may every sorrowful spirit now find peace and rest in looking, not to itself, not even to God's dealings with itself, but to the cross of Christ. P.

Now as to the practical application of these inspiring facts, it was but a natural and easy inference that this same God must be still as mighty to save His people as ever—as strong against His enemies in the age of this Psalm, as when He cast Pharaoh and all his host into the depths of the sea as a stone is sunk into the mighty waters. The same great God who never lacked resources to humble the proudest nations of the ages long ago may be trusted to do all He wills in the ages present or future. That wisdom and power which stand out sublimely prominent in the great deeds of the ancient times will always be equal to any demand through all the ages. His troubled and discouraged people may safely banish their fears and give to this great God their humble confidence under whatever calamities, through whatever straits. Is anything too hard for *such a God*? C.

Luther was once in earnest prayer over some matter of great moment, desiring to know the mind of God in it, and it seemed as though he heard God say to him, "I am not to be traced ;" and some one, commenting on this, adds, "If God is not to be traced, He is to be *trusted*." The writer of this Psalm has evidently reached very satisfactory conclusions on this subject. He is in great trouble and darkness ; he is tempted to doubt the goodness of the Lord ;

he asks, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" But he reaches into the cloud which veils the Divine dealings, and draws strength and comfort out of it. He says, "This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High ;" those very years when He veiled Himself in darkness, yet amid thunders and hurricane led His people through the dark and dreadful sea. "Thy way was in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps were not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock." And the secret of this confidence is revealed in the thirteenth verse, in the words, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary ;" or, as the best interpreters now render it, "Thy way is *in holiness*." Put these two thoughts together, and one explains the other. Thy way is in the sea, dark, mysterious, dreadful ; but Thy way is in holiness ; in perfect wisdom inspired by perfect love, and therefore a way of truth, leading up through the darkness into the eternal light. No matter how strange the way, if it be a way of holiness. What kind of a way that is Isaiah tells us. It is a *clean* way ; "the unclean shall not pass over it." It is a *plain* way for the trusting spirit ; "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." It is a *safe* way : "No ravenous beast shall go up thereon." It is a way *for redeemed men*, redeemed from the world's economy of sight and sense, and translated into the kingdom and life of faith ; they shall walk there, yea, though it lie through the midst of the sea, with songs in the night and with everlasting joy upon their heads. No matter how deep the mystery, provided God's holiness is behind it. If any one less than God invite us to follow him into the dark, we may rightly tremble ; but if He leadeth His own people like a flock, what matters it by what ways? So long as holiness leads, Asaph and Paul may unite in saying, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose," not their own purpose. V.

PSALM LXXVIII.

MASCHIL OF ASAPH.

- 1 GIVE ear, O my people, to my law :
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
- 2 I will open my mouth in a parable ;
I will utter dark sayings of old :
- 3 Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
- 4 We will not hide them from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises
of the LORD,
And his strength, and his wondrous works
that he hath done.
- 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which he commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their
children :
- 6 That the generation to come might know
them, even the children which should be
born ;
Who should arise and tell *them* to their
children :
- 7 That they might set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments :
- 8 And might not be as their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation ;
A generation that set not their heart aright,
And whose spirit was not stedfast with
God.
- 9 The children of Ephraim, being armed and
carrying bows,
Turned back in the day of battle.
- 10 They kept not the covenant of God,
And refused to walk in his law ;
- 11 And they forgot his doings,
And his wondrous works that he had shewed
them.
- 12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their
fathers,
In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
- 13 He clave the sea, and caused them to pass
through ;
And he made the waters to stand as an
heap.
- 14 In the day-time also he led them with a
cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
- 15 He clave rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink abundantly as out of
the depths.
- 16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.
- 17 Yet went they on still to sin against him,
To rebel against the Most High in the desert.
- 18 And they tempted God in their heart
By asking meat for their lust.
- 19 Yea, they spake against God ;
They said, Can God prepare a table in the
wilderness ?
- 20 Behold, he smote the rock, that waters
gushed out,
And streams overflowed ;
Can he give bread also ?
Will he provide flesh for his people ?
- 21 Therefore the LORD heard, and was wroth :
And a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also went up against Israel ;
- 22 Because they believed not in God,
And trusted not in his salvation.
- 23 Yet he commanded the skies above,
And opened the doors of heaven ;
- 24 And he rained down manna upon them to
eat,
And gave them of the corn of heaven.
- 25 Man did eat the bread of the mighty :
He sent them meat to the full.
- 26 He caused the east wind to blow in the
heaven :
And by his power he guided the south wind,
- 27 He rained flesh also upon them as the dust,
And winged fowl as the sand of the seas :
- 28 And he let it fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their habitations.
- 29 So they did eat, and were well filled ;
And he gave them that they lusted after.
- 30 They were not estranged from their lust,
Their meat was yet in their mouths,
- 31 When the anger of God went up against
them,
And slew of the fattest of them,
And smote down the young men of Israel.
- 32 For all this they sinned still,
And believed not in his wondrous works.
- 33 Therefore their days did he consume in van-
ity,
And their years in terror.

- 34 When he slew them, then they inquired after him :
And they returned and sought God early [*earnestly*].
- 35 And they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their redeemer.
- 36 But they flattered him with their mouth,
And lied unto him with their tongue.
- 37 For their heart was not right with him,
Neither were they faithful in his covenant.
- 38 But he, being full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not :
Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
And did not stir up all his wrath.
- 39 And he remembered that they were but flesh ;
A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.
- 40 How oft did they rebel against him in the wilderness,
And grieve him in the desert !
- 41 And they turned again and tempted God,
And provoked the Holy One of Israel.
- 42 They remembered not his hand,
Nor the day when he redeemed them from the adversary.
- 43 How he set his signs in Egypt,
And his wonders in the field of Zoan ;
- 44 And turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not drink.
- 45 He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them ;
And frogs, which destroyed them.
- 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar,
And their labour unto the locust.
- 47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycamore trees with frost.
- 48 He gave over their cattle also to the hail,
And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
- 49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
Wrath, and indignation, and trouble,
A band of angels of evil.
- 50 He made a path for his anger ;
He spared not their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the pestilence ;
- 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,
The chief of their strength in the tents of Ham :
- 52 But he led forth his own people like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
- 53 And he led them safely, so that they feared not :
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
- 54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary,
To this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.
- 55 He drove out the nations also before them,
And allotted them for an inheritance by line,
And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.
- 56 Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God,
And kept not his testimonies ;
- 57 But turned back, and dealt treacherously like their fathers :
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
- 58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.
- 59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth,
And greatly abhorred Israel :
- 60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent which he placed among men ;
- 61 And delivered his strength into captivity,
And his glory into the adversary's hand.
- 62 He gave his people over also unto the sword ;
And was wroth with his inheritance.
- 63 Fire devoured their young men ;
And their maidens had no marriage-song.
- 64 Their priests fell by the sword ;
And their widows made no lamentation.
- 65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep,
Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.
- 66 And he smote his adversaries backward :
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
- 67 Moreover he refused the tent of Joseph,
And chose not the tribe of Ephraim ;
- 68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
The mount Zion which he loved.
- 69 And he built his sanctuary like the heights,
Like the earth which he hath established for ever.
- 70 He chose David also his servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds :
- 71 From following the ewes that give suck he brought him,
To feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.
- 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart ;
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

THE history of Israel, from the Exodus to the establishment of the kingdom of David, is reviewed by the Psalmist in this the longest, and probably the earliest, of the historical Psalms, intended for public recitation in the services of the sanctuary. Those services were organized by David, and the chief place among the superintendents was assigned to Asaph, to whom this Psalm is attributed by the inscription. The principal object of the writer is to draw lessons of warning and admonition from the records of national sins and punishments. Special attention is directed to the wrongdoings of one tribe, that of Ephraim; partly, it may be, as having from the time of Joshua throughout the period of the Judges held the post of leader of the whole nation, and as such being in some sense its representative; partly, however, with reference to the transfer of the national sanctuary from Shiloh to Mount Zion (see vs. 67, 68). *Cook*.—No historic connection can be determined for this Psalm. It sweeps over the whole period from Moses to David, in order to impress upon the hearts of the Israelites their obligations to God and the danger of rebelling against Him. *De Witt*.

In this, the longest of the historical Psalms, the history of Israel is briefly recapitulated, from the time of the Exodus to the final union of the tribes under David, and the establishment of the kingdom in his family. This appeal to the past is made evidently with a purpose. The Psalmist comes forward as a prophet to rebuke the sin, the ingratitude, the rebellion of his people. This he does by showing them the present in the light of the past. God had wrought wonders in behalf of their fathers of old; God had redeemed them from Egypt, led them through the wilderness, brought them to His holy mountain. But the history of their nation had been at once a history of wonders and a history of rebellions. Miracle had followed on miracle to win them; chastisement had succeeded to chastisement to deter them; but the miracle was forgotten, the chastisement produced but a temporary reformation. They had ever been "a faithless and stubborn generation." It is evident, from his opening words, that the Psalmist was anxious to bring out sharply and clearly the lessons with which the past teemed. He saw that his people were in danger of forgetting those lessons. He saw in that history instruction, warning, reproof, for the age in which he lived.

It is, however, remarkable that another and more special purpose appears in the Psalm. If the whole nation is rebuked, the rebuke falls

heaviest upon Ephraim. Ephraim is singled out as the leader in the earlier apostasy of the people, as the very type of a faithless and recreant spirit (v. 12). The rejection of Ephraim and the choice of Judah are dwelt upon at the close in a tone of satisfaction and triumph, as the fulfilment of the purpose of God. It is scarcely possible, therefore, to resist the conclusion that the Psalm was written after the defection of the Ten Tribes, and that it was designed either to curb the pride of the northern kingdom, or to address a warning to Judah, based on the example of Ephraim. Various conjectures have been hazarded as to the time when the Psalm was written. P.

The intention of the (seventeen) national and historical poems, and their tone and spirit, are well seen in this Psalm. The intention was the religious education of the people from the earliest childhood upward; the tone and spirit are such as could not fail to form the Hebrew mind to greatness, to depth and soberness of feeling, and to a profound consciousness of that providential government which fitted the people for other and higher purposes than national aggrandizement. This metrical summary of the people's history, majestic in its imagery and musical in any translation, would, in its own Hebrew and to the Hebrew ear, commend itself at once as poetry, as music, and as devout sentiment. Such was its purpose. The wonders of the Divine government from the remotest times were to be fixed in the memory of children's children to the end of time. I. T.

1. *Maschil*. By Asaph. *Listen, my people, to my law; incline your ear to the sayings of my mouth.* This is eminently a didactic Psalm, because it teaches the true meaning of events in the history of Israel which might otherwise seem to be mere matters of curiosity. For the same reason it was necessary that it should be so designated in the title or inscription. A.

1-4. The introduction, announcing the Psalmist's purpose. He will recall the past, that it may act as a warning for the present, and that the wholesome lessons which it teaches may be perpetuated in the future. In the following four verses he declares that such commemoration of God's wonders is the very destiny of Israel. For this end did he give them his law, and the lively oracles of his mouth. P.

2. The poet does not mean to say that he will literally utter apothegms and propound riddles, but that he will set forth the history of the fathers after the manner of an apothegm and riddle, so that it may become a parable, *i.e.*, a didactic history, and its events marks of

interrogation and nota-benes for the present generation. D.—Analogies are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and the lives of believers. The tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all-wise Providence. Paul said, "which things are an allegory," and Asaph spake to the point when he called his narrative "a parable."

3. Told us. Dr. Doddridge owed much to the Dutch tiles and his mother's explanations of the Bible narratives. The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath-school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mothers' tears and fathers' prayers. S.

4. Children are their parents' heirs; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of a good man's treasure, nor the least of His children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience. "Our fathers have told us what works Thou didst in their days, how Thou didst drive out the heathen," etc. (Psalm 44:1, 2); from this they ground their confidence (v. 4). *Gurnall.*

5-8. All these points are plain—that God gave their fathers a code of civil law quite complete, and also a system of religious services, to be enjoined carefully upon their children after them, and by them upon their children onward through future ages—all for the high purpose of leading them to set their hope in God and abide in true-hearted obedience. C.—The Church on earth, though mortal in its members, as a community is undying. The Christian Church is to exhibit the sublime spectacle of an unearthly government, embarked in an enterprise of mercy for all time. Its members are "commanded to make it known to their children, that the generation to come might know it, even the children who should be born; who should arise and declare it to their children." And as time rolls on, the only change which this spiritual government is to exhibit is that which necessarily arises under God from persevering fidelity to its original design—extended domains and a nearer approach to universal conquest. "For the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." *J. Harris.*

9. *The sons of Ephraim, armed bowmen, turned (back) in the day of battle.* The people, during the ascendancy of Ephraim, proved

false to their great mission of subduing Canaan and destroying its inhabitants. This neglect is represented in the history itself as the source of all the national calamities that followed. As the bow among the ancients was one of the chief weapons of war, the description *armed bowmen* is equivalent to well-armed soldiers, and is added to enhance the guilt and shame of those who thus betrayed their trust, in spite of every external advantage. A.—Ephraim had been, after the settlement in Canaan, the most numerous and the most powerful of the tribes. Shiloh, the religious capital of the nation, and Shechem, the gathering-place of the tribes, were both within its borders. During the time of the judges it seems to have asserted a kind of supremacy over the rest. Possibly the Psalmist is thinking of this. Having their rejection in view, he remembers their ancient position, and regards them as leaders of the people, and, morally, leaders in their sin. P.

The Psalm accuses "the children of Ephraim" because, "being armed and carrying bows, they turned back in the day of battle." That saying deduces obligation from equipment, and preaches a stringent code of duty to those who are in any direction largely gifted. Power to its last particle is duty, and not small is the crime of those who, with great capacities, have small desire to use them, and leave the brunt of the battle to half-trained soldiers badly armed. A. M.

13-20. Now follows the exemplification, in certain detailed instances, of the faithlessness and disobedience and forgetfulness of their fathers in the wilderness. First (in vs. 13-16), some of God's wonders wrought on their behalf are mentioned, and then (vs. 17-20) the thankless and perverse spirit in which these wonders were regarded. P.

14. *In the daytime also He led them with a cloud.* He did it all. *He alone.* He brought them into the wilderness, and He led them through it. The cloud both led and shadowed the tribes. It was by day a vast sun-screen, rendering the fierce heat of the sun and the glare of the desert sand bearable. *And all the night with a light of fire.* So constant was the care of the Great Shepherd that all night and every night the token of His presence was with His people. That cloud which was a shade by day was as a sun by night. Even thus the grace which cools and calms our joys soothes and solaces our sorrows. What ■ mercy to have light with us amid the wilderness of affliction! We have felt our God to be both shade

and light, according as our changing circumstances have required. S.

17. *And they continued still to sin against Him, to rebel against the Highest in the desert.* What ought to have been the effect of these Divine interpositions is clearly implied in this description of the actual effect. The very means which should have made them more obedient made them more rebellious. The last word in Hebrew means a desert, properly so called, a dry land, and may here be used to suggest the idea that they foolishly and wickedly provoked God in the very situation where they were most dependent on Him for protection and supplies. The extent of this dependence is implied in the use of a Divine name signifying sovereignty, supremacy. A.

18. *They tempted God, i.e., demanded, in their unbelief, signs and wonders, to put His power to the proof, instead of waiting in faith and prayer for its exercise (repeated vs. 41, 56, as a kind of refrain). P.*

22. *They believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation.* This is the master sin, the crying sin; it is in itself evil and the parent of evils. It was this sin which shut Israel out of Canaan, and it shuts myriads out of heaven. God is ready to save, combining power with willingness, but rebellious man will not trust his Saviour, and therefore is condemned already. In the text it appears as if all Israel's other sins were as nothing compared with this. S.

32. They did believe the history of His works—namely, that such things as are there recorded were done; but yet they did not believe the *prophecy* or *promise* which was virtually in those works—namely, that God would do more wonders for them till He had finished and accomplished their deliverance. That history of bringing through the Red Sea had this prophecy in it, that they should be brought safe to Canaan; but they did not believe the voice of this prophecy. When God gave them water out of the rock, this work promised that He would give them meat out of the clouds, if they needed it; but this they believed not. *Caryl.*

33. *And (therefore) He wasted in vanity their days and their years in terror.* As the preceding verse relates to the refusal of the people to go up against the Canaanites in the first year of the exodus, so this relates to the forty years of error in the wilderness, by which that refusal was at once indulged and punished. The fruitless monotony of their existence during this long period, and their constant apprehension of

some outbreak of Divine wrath, are expressed here by the words translated *vanity* and *terror*. The meaning of the verb is that He suffered or caused their years to be thus unprofitably and miserably spent. A.

Their persistent unbelief despite of the presence of perpetual miracles, and the somewhat frequent recurrence of those which were new and fresh, are the strong points made in this Psalm. Similar depravity is a fearful fact in the human life of every age. It stands here a suggestive rebuke to the men of all time that in the very presence of most impressive testimonies of God's love and power they are still so slow of heart to believe in His love and to trust His power to save. The Hebrew nation, doomed to wander forty years up and down, back and forth, in that waste, dreary wilderness, consuming their days in vanity and their years in trouble, are God's witnesses to the guilt of such sin, suggesting how the unbelief of professed Christians dooms them to barrenness and desolation during the many years of their earthly pilgrimage; while in their Father's house is bread enough and to spare, and their earthly life might just as well be spent in the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey. C.

34–39. The passage is a most striking and affecting picture of man's heart and God's gracious forbearance in all ages; man's sin calling for chastisement, the chastisement producing only temporary amendment, God's goodness forgotten, and yet God's great love never wearied, and God's infinite compassion ever moved afresh by man's weakness and misery. P.

34. *When He slew them, then they returned.* What does God send forth His arrows for, and shoot this man with sickness, another with poverty, and a third with shame, but to reclaim and to recover them? For God makes not the miseries of men His recreation; yet He goes on with His work, for He designs nothing but cure to the person whom He afflicts. *South.*—Our lives are full of afflictions; and it is as great a part of a Christian's skill to know afflictions as to know mercies; to know when God smites, as to know when He girds us; and it is our sin to overlook afflictions as well as to overlook mercies. *Caryl.*

The greatness of the pain we experience in the crossing of our desires and in parting with cherished objects shows that we needed the trial; that our affections were too strongly setting toward the world. The things that are taken from us and for which we grieve so much

are the good gifts of God, and if we cannot enjoy them still loving Him more, He may not continue them to us without permitting us to lose the best good He can confer. He offers us a good in comparison with which all others are as nothing, but it is a good which we can obtain only on condition of prizing it more than all. He must either take off our affections from inferior objects, and make them as steps for our ascending to Him, or let us perish in our choice.

H. Hooker.

38. He, full of compassion, forgave.

The Lord will not cast away weak saints for their great unbelief, because there is a little faith in them. He will not throw them away for that hypocrisy that is in them, because of that little sincerity that is in them. A wise man will not throw away a little gold, because of a great deal of dross that cleaves to it; and will God? *T. Brooks.*

39. *And he remembered that they (were but) flesh, a breath departing and returning not.* Here as elsewhere the frailty and infirmity of man is assigned as a ground of the Divine forbearance. The idea of fragility and brief duration is expressed still more strongly by the exquisite figure in the last clause. *A.*

38, 39. Those historic events afford a lively illustration of the Divine qualities suggested here—deep compassion in view of human guilt; infinite readiness to forgive the penitent; turning away His anger and giving it but little scope compared with the ill-desert which He must notice and rebuke; and finally, making large account of human frailty, remembering that man is but flesh, encompassed with temptations that are mighty and having but feeble power to withstand them. Such have always been God's marvellous ways of mercy toward our sinning race! *C.*

40. After thus celebrating God's tender compassion in striking contrast with the perpetual rebellion and ingratitude of the people, the Psalmist resumes the sad tale afresh. But instead of mentioning other instances of rebellion in the wilderness (v. 40), he passes from that topic to dwell on the wonders wrought in Egypt, the lively recollection of which ought to have kept the people from these repeated provocations. Thus he takes up again the thread dropped at v. 12. The second principal portion of the Psalm begins with this verse. It is occupied, first, with the narrative of the plagues in Egypt, the exodus, and Israel's entrance into the promised land (vs. 40-55). It then touches briefly on the history under the judges, the Philistine invasion in the time of

Eli, which was God's chastisement for transgression, the disaster at Shiloh, whereby Ephraim was robbed of his ancient honors, and which led to the choice of Zion, the ascendancy of the tribe of Judah, and the union of the kingdom under David (vs. 56-72). *P.*

52. To a people so familiar with shepherd life, no analogy could be more apt, suggestive, perfect, than this: God leading this nation forth from Egypt and onward through the wilderness as a shepherd does his flock, carefully, lovingly, safely. *C.*

54. He brought them to the border of His sanctuary—that is, to the holy land; so called especially because of His sanctuary, the place of His residence; to which He makes all the land to be but as bounds and limits because of the eminency of that place, the holiness whereof did, as it were, spread to all other parts of the land, as if the whole had been a sanctuary and consecrated ground. It is, therefore, to the honor of the whole land as well as of the sanctuary that He calleth it "*the holy border*," a "*border of His sanctuary*." *Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

56. *And they tempted and resisted God. Most High, and His testimonies did not keep.* Having brought down the narrative of God's dealings with the older race to the conquest of Canaan, the Psalmist now resumes his charge (against the following generations) of being no better than their fathers. *A.*—Paul says, with reference to the same transactions, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted" (1 Cor. 10:9). These texts relate to the same rebellious acts of the Israelites in the wilderness. In the former, the Person they tempted is called the Most High God; in the latter, He is called Christ; therefore Christ is the Most High God. *Jones of Nayland.*

58. *And made Him angry with their heights, and with their idols made Him jealous.* Here, for the first time, idolatry is mentioned as the great national sin of Israel after the death of Joshua and the contemporary elders. This sin is intimately connected with the one described in v. 9, since the failure to exterminate the Canaanites and gain complete possession of the country, with its necessary consequence, the continued residence of gross idolaters in the midst of Israel, could not fail to expose the chosen people to perpetual temptation, and afford occasion to their worst defections. In the last clause, *graven images* are put for the whole class of idols or created gods, of whom the true God must be jealous as His rivals, as well as indignant at the heights or high places,

the hill-tops where these false gods were most usually worshipped. The whole form of expression is Mosaic. A.

60. The tabernacle was at Shiloh during the whole period of the judges. God rejected and forsook it when the ark was given into the hand of the Philistines (1 Sam. 4). The ark was never brought back thither, and the tabernacle was removed first to Nob and afterward to Gibeon. P.

61. *And gave up to captivity His strength, and His beauty into the foeman's hand.* This is a still more distinct allusion to the capture of the ark by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4 : 17). The pronouns may be referred either to God or Israel. In the former case the ark is called His strength, because it was the symbol of His saving presence and a pledge for the exertion of His power to protect and save His people. It is called His beauty or honor, as it marked the place where God was pleased to manifest His glory. At the same time it was Israel's strength, because it was considered as insuring the Divine protection (1 Sam. 4 : 3), and His glory, because the possession of this symbol was His highest honor (v. 21). Both these senses are so perfectly appropriate, that it is not easy to choose either to the entire exclusion of the other. A.

63, 64. The utter desolation of the land strikingly pictured by its *silence*. Neither the joyous strains of the marriage-song nor the sad wail of the funeral chant fall upon the ear. It was a land of silence, a land of the dead.

65, 66. God punishes and then delivers. The reference is to the long series of victories over the Philistines under Samuel, Saul, and David. P.

67. *And rejected the tent of Joseph, and the tribe of Ephraim did not choose.* This is the completion and specification of the statement in v. 60. Even after the punishment of Israel as a whole had ceased, Ephraim, though still a member of the chosen people, was deprived of the ascendancy, of which he had proved himself unworthy, and by means of which he had betrayed the whole race into grievous sin. The *tent* or house of Joseph (the progenitor of Ephraim) is particularly mentioned, because the honor taken from that family was the honor of God's dwelling in the midst of them. A.

68. Ephraim lost her pre-eminence among the tribes; Judah arose to this position, and God located the sacred ark on Mount Zion. This fact brings out one of the purposed political lessons of the Psalm, that God chose Judah, David, and Mount Zion before Ephraim and

Shiloh, a choice therefore which all the tribes were bound to recognize and accept.

69. God built His sanctuary stable as the mountains, fixed as the earth, which He has founded for the ages. This is in contrast with the ark migratory from place to place, as in the period from Shiloh to its location on the hill of Zion. C.

72. Fed them according to the integrity of his heart. In spite of his transgressions, which he always bitterly repented of, and which were therefore blotted out of the Book of God, David remains to all princes and rulers of the earth as the noblest pattern. In perfect inward truth he knew and felt himself to be "*king by the grace of God.*" The crown and sceptre he bore merely in trust from the King of all kings; and to his latest breath he endeavored with all earnestness to be found as a genuine theocratic king, who in everything must conduct his earthly government according to the ordinances and directions of God. Therefore the Lord made all that he took in hand prosper, and nothing was clearer to the people than that the Lord was *truly with the king*. F. W. Krummacher.

This ancient and Israelitish unbelief finds continual modern and Gentile illustration. *We* are ever limiting the Holy One whom we profess to serve. Amid our wilderness of emergency, temptation, trial, our faithless hearts are asking the same question, "Who is the Lord that we should serve Him? How can He deliver us?" God stands there, over against each one of us, with an infinity of blessing in His hands—of deliverance, of present and abiding peace, of the promise of the *land beyond*; but unbelief is a staggering and blear-eyed creature, who often cannot see what God proffers, and even when she does, reaches forth such palsied hands they cannot reach and hold the blessing. W. Hoyt.

These Israelites, who lived encompassed by miracle, had nothing which we have not. They got their bread by direct gift from heaven; we get ours no less from God, though it is eaten in the sweat of our brow. They got their marching orders from the cloud; we get ours no less from God, though we have to use our brains to read them. The form of the direction has altered, the reality has not, and the change of form is advance, not retrogression. The cloud guided only the outward steps; the spirit needs other direction than it afforded. Chil-

dren may be led so, but men want another sort of leading. The guidance which God gives the hearts that seek it to-day is every bit as real, and a great deal more noble and thorough than this of a moving pillar. What the world calls "circumstances" we should call "providence," and carefully watch as one element in God's guidance. He guides us by His Word, the largest principles of which are not too large to be applied to our smallest duties, and the teachings of which need but "an honest and good heart" to apply them, in order to yield certain direction. He guides us by His own spirit, speaking through our reason and judgment; and, if we will but keep our noisy inclinations quiet, we shall generally be able to hear His voice saying, "This is the way, walk

ye in it." Life has many perplexities, and we are often brought to a stand-still. But only those who have tried it know how much mist is cleared away, and how seldom their perplexities remain insoluble to those who seek simply to know and do as God wishes. But, above all, we have the true pillar of guidance in Jesus Christ, who has left "us an example" that we "should follow His steps." Why, even an unbeliever like John Stuart Mill had to say that there was no better rule for conduct than to do as Jesus would have done if in our place. Few, indeed, will be the knots which cannot be untied by taking God's Word for our law, Christ for our pattern, God's Spirit for our counsellor, and circumstances, which are God's providence, for our instructors. A. M.

PSALM LXXIX.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

- 1 O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
- 2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
- 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;
And there was none to bury them.
- 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
- 5 How long, O LORD, wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that know thee not,
And upon the kingdoms that call not upon thy name.
- 7 For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his habitation.
- 8 Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers:

- Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us
For we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name:
And deliver us, and purge away our sins,
for thy name's sake.
 - 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?
Let the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed
Be known among the heathen in our sight.
 - 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee;
According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to death;
 - 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom
Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.
 - 13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture
Will give thee thanks for ever:
We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

THIS Psalm is a lamentation over the same great national calamity which, as we have already seen, is bewailed in terms so pathetic in the seventy-fourth. The two Psalms have, indeed, some points of difference, as well as of resemblance. The great features in the scene of misery are presented in the two with a different degree of prominence. In the one, the destruction of the temple occupies the foreground; in the other, the terrible carnage which had made the streets of Jerusalem run with blood is the chief subject of lamentation. In the former, the hope of deliverance and triumph breaks out strongly in the very midst of the sorrow and the wailing; in the latter, the tone of sadness prevails throughout, with the exception of the short verse with which the Psalm concludes. There is also a marked difference in style. The seventy-fourth Psalm is abrupt, and sometimes obscure; the seventy-ninth, on the contrary, flows smoothly and easily throughout. But there is the same deep pathos in both Psalms; in both, the same picturesque force of description; both the one and the other may be called, without exaggeration, the funeral anthem of a nation. There can, therefore, be little doubt that both Psalms, even if not written by the same poet, yet bewail the same calamity. It is equally certain that there are but two periods of the national history to which the language of either could properly apply: the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, or the sack of the city by Antiochus Epiphanes. The Psalm consists, first, of a complaint (vs. 1-4), and then of a prayer that God would visit His people again in mercy, and pour out His vengeance upon their enemies (vs. 5-12); while a closing verse announces the gratitude with which God's mercy will be acknowledged (v. 13). P.

2. Thy servants. Thy saints. No temporal wrath, no calamities whatsoever can separate the Lord's children from God's love and estimation of them, nor untie the relation between God and them; for here, albeit their flesh be devoured by the fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth, yet remain they the Lord's servants and saints under these sufferings. *Dickson.*

3. None to bury, this being, according to the deep-rooted feeling of all ancient nations, a great aggravation of the calamity. P.—These are points of the sorest affliction—the shedding of blood like water round about the holy city; human bodies left unburied to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey, and especially that these slain and unburied men were

God's servants, His saints. Surely God will hear such complaints of sorrow from His surviving people.

4. The poets and prophets of Israel, jealous for the honor of God before the world, felt this point most keenly—the reproach brought on God's chosen people, and by implication upon their God, when their heathen enemies were victorious over them. (See Lam. 5:1 and 2:15, 16 and Ezra 9:6, 7.) C.

6. "Pour out," etc. The ground of his prayer is not only that they have not called upon God's name, but that they have *devoured Jacob*. Hence he asks for a righteous retribution. Precisely in the same spirit Habakkuk long before had said of the Chaldeans, "O Jehovah, for judgment Thou hast ordained them, and, O Thou Rock, for correction Thou hast appointed them." P.

8. As is evident from v. 9, the poet does not mean that the present generation, itself innocent, has to pay the penalty of the guilt of the fathers (on the contrary, Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezek. 18:20); he prays as one of those who have turned from the sins of the fathers, and who can now no longer think of themselves as placed under wrath, but under sin-pardoning and redeeming grace. D.—Scripture nowhere teaches that a man is guilty in the sight of God for any sins but his own. Sinning himself, he allows the deeds of his fathers; he is a partaker in their iniquities; he helps to swell the fearful catalogue of guilt which at last brings down God's judgment; but his condemnation, if he be condemned, is for his own transgression, not for those of his fathers. P.

9. God of our salvation. If human reason were to judge of the many and great blows wherewith God so often smote and wasted His people, it would call God not the Saviour of the people, but the destroyer and oppressor. But the faith of the prophet judges far otherwise of God, and sees even in an angry and pursuing God the salvation of His people. The gods of the nations, though they do not afflict even in temporal things, are gods not of the salvation of their worshippers, but of their perdition. But our God, even when He is most severely angry and smites, is not the God of destruction, but of salvation. *Musculus.*

For Thy name's sake. Twice the appeal is made "*for Thy name's sake*," that revelation of God which He had made of Himself to Moses when He passed by and proclaimed the name of Jehovah (Ex. 24:6, 7). P.—The choicest mercies God's people have are for His name's sake; they have pardon of

sin for His name's sake (Psalm 25 : 11) ; purging of sin for His name's sake (79 : 9) ; leading in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake (23 : 2) ; quickening of their dead and dull hearts for His name's sake (143 : 11). Though His people offend Him, yet He forsakes them not, for His great name's sake. *W. Greenhill.*

10. This argument in favor of God's interposition, founded on the false conclusions which His enemies would draw from His refusal, is of frequent occurrence in the Pentateuch. *Where is their God*, the invisible, spiritual being whom they worship, but who cannot save them from external dangers? Or the meaning may be, where is the proof of that almighty power, and that love for His own people, of which they have so often and so loudly boasted? *A.*

11. If any of you walk in sighs and sorrow before God, He takes these sighs as applications to Him for relief. Your misery, vented even in a sigh, is a declaration of your need. There are times when you cannot enter into long confessions ; when the spirit is so weary that you feel that you cannot speak. Much might at such a season be spoken by a sigh ; pour it forth, and it will reach the throne. And here it will prove to be not only *an unexpressed declaration of your state*, but also *an unexpressed wish for deliverance* therefrom ; and it will be heard by God. *P. B. Power.*

Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked, filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself on turning a sharp corner in a spot of singular interest—the "Jews' place of Wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle ; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window ; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of

recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred inclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure (Psalm 102 : 14). It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations, dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there—pale, haggard, careworn men, tottering on pilgrim staves ; and little girls with white faces and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro ; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth ; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones ; some were kissing them, some had their arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down-trodden outcasts—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonored ruins of their ancient sanctuary—chanting, now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own Psalmist, "*O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance ; Thy holy temple have they defiled. We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord ? wilt Thou be angry forever ?*" *J. L. Porter.*

PSALM LXXX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO SHOSHANNIM EDUTH. A PSALM OF ASAPH.

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| <p>1 GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock ;
Thou that sittest upon the cherubim, shine
forth.</p> <p>2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manas-
seh, stir up thy might,
And come to save us.</p> <p>3 Turn us again, O God ;
And cause thy face to shine, and we shall
be saved.</p> <p>4 O LORD God of hosts,
How long wilt thou be angry against the
prayer of thy people ?</p> <p>5 Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in large
measure.</p> <p>■ Thou makest us a strife unto our neigh-
bours :
And our enemies laugh among themselves.</p> <p>7 Turn us again, O God of hosts ;
And cause thy face to shine, and we shall
be saved.</p> <p>8 Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt :
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plant-
edst it.</p> <p>■ Thou preparedst <i>room</i> before it,
And it took deep root, and filled the land.</p> <p>10 The mountains were covered with the shad-
ow of it,</p> | <p>And the boughs thereof were <i>like</i> cedars of
God.</p> <p>11 She sent out her branches unto the sea,
And her shoots unto the River.</p> <p>12 Why hast thou broken down her fences,
So that all they which pass by the way do
pluck her ?</p> <p>13 The boar out of the wood doth ravage it,
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.</p> <p>14 Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of
hosts :
Look down from heaven, and behold, and
visit this vine,</p> <p>15 And the stock which thy right hand hath
planted,
And the branch that thou madest strong for
thyself.</p> <p>16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down :
They perish at the rebuke of thy counte-
nance.</p> <p>17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right
hand,
Upon the son of man whom thou madest
strong for thyself.</p> <p>18 So shall we not go back from thee :
Quicken thou us, and we will call upon thy
name.</p> <p>19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts ;
Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be
saved.</p> |
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As in the case of most of the historical Psalms, so in the case of this, it is impossible to say with certainty at what period it was written. The allusions are never sufficiently definite to lead to any positive conclusion. All that is certain is, that the time was a time of great disaster, that the nation was trampled down under the foot of foreign invaders. The poet turns to God with the earnest and repeated prayer for deliverance, and bases his appeal on the past. God had brought a vine out of Egypt, and planted it in Canaan. How could He give up that vine to be devastated by the wild beasts ? Will he not appear at the head of the armies of Israel, as once He went before her sons in the desert with a pillar of fire ?

Will He not, as of old, lift up the light of His countenance upon them ?

The strophical division of the Psalm is marked by the refrain (vs. 3, 7, 19), with a variation of it in v. 14. The strophes are thus of very unequal length. The first has three verses ; the second, four ; the third, twelve ; though this last, again, is partially broken by the imperfect refrain in v. 14. The first two of these strophes are, in fact, introductory, containing the cry for help and the lamentation over disaster. The third constitutes the principal part of the Psalm, where, under the figure of a vine, the history of Israel is portrayed. In the refrain we have even more emphatically repeated the burden of the Psalmist's prayer ; the emphasis being each

time deepened by the name given to God : First, " God ;" then, " God of hosts ;" lastly, " Jehovah, God of hosts." P.

Israel, thought of as a vine, transplanted from Egypt to Canaan and long time prosperous there, has now been sadly damaged ; the enclosing, protecting hedge around her broken down ; the wild beasts tearing her tendrils, plucking her fruit, and trampling it under foot ; the fire has done its fearful work of destruction upon her. The Psalm is a prayer to God for help in this emergency—its thrice-recurring refrain (vs. 3, 7, 19) giving this keynote : " Turn us again ; let Thy face shine ; so shall we be saved." C.

It is an Asaph-prayer again, full of pleas in Israel's behalf. They call to His mind the days of *Joseph*, when the Lord miraculously fed them in Egypt. And then the *tabernacle days*, when (first, since the days of Eden) the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim on the mercy-seat. They call to His mind *wilderness times* (v. 2), when their march was gladdened by His presence, " Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh" looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way, " O God, bring us back again ! Cause Thy face to shine, and all shall be well again." A. A. Bonar.

1, 2. Grand and touching as is this address, taken in its application to the latest decline of the Jewish kingdom, it is still more so, when we see in it the reflected image of the order of the ancient march, when the ark of God went forth, the pillar of fire shining high above it, surrounded by the armed Levites, its rear guarded by the warrior tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, the brother and the sons of Joseph, doubtless intrusted with the embalmed remains of their mighty ancestor. Stanley.

Every tribe kept its proper place in its own division, whether in rest or on the march. When the host moved, each tribe struck its tents, raised its banner, and fell in at its appointed station. Places were assigned to the sacred ark, and the parts and furniture of the tabernacle borne by the Levites. The descendants of Joseph, constituting the three tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, formed the division that followed the ark. Hence the prayer in vs. 1, 2. D. F.—In motion or at rest, the symbols of God's visible presence were in *front* of these three tribes—*before* Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh stood the emblem of Jehovah's strength and glory. The prayer of this verse, therefore, reminds Jehovah of his local as

well as spiritual relation to these tribes during the forty years of their wilderness life. C.—Whatever the national disaster here deplored, the prayer is, that these tribes may be restored to their ancient position, united as of old, and as of old led by God Himself, with the visible symbols of His presence.

3. *Turn us again*, or " restore us," either from the exile, supposing the Psalm to have been written after the captivity of the ten tribes ; or in the more general sense of recovery from disaster. *Show the light of Thy countenance*. Again an allusion to the history of the people in the wilderness. P.

Turn us, and cause Thy face to shine. To Thyself convert us, from the earthly to the heavenly ; and when we are converted show Thy countenance that we may know Thee ; show Thy power that we may fear Thee ; show Thy wisdom that we may reverence Thee ; show Thy goodness that we may love Thee ; show them once, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face and be saved. When Thou dost save we shall be saved ; when Thou withdrawest Thy hand we cannot be saved. *Savonarola*.—It is not so much said, " turn our captivity," but turn " us." All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances, but of character. When the Lord turns His people He will soon turn their condition. The word may be read, " restore us ;" verily, it is a choice mercy that " He restoreth my soul." *And cause Thy face to shine*. Be favorable to us, smile upon us. This was the high-priest's blessing upon Israel : what the Lord has already given us by our High-priest and Mediator we may right confidently ask of Him. S.

5. Strong words are these, that Thou givest Thy people their own tears for bread, and tears also for their drinking water, and that in large measure. Will not the God of love take these tears away and feed us with far other bread and water than such as this ? C.

7. *Turn us again, O God of hosts*, and then *cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved*. It is the burden of the song. They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that this was it that provoked God to hide His face from them and to give them up into the hand of their enemies ; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end. " Lord, turn us to Thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then Thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and

deliverance." Observe: No salvation but from God's favor. "*Cause Thy face to shine*, let us have Thy love and the light of Thy countenance, and then we shall be saved." No obtaining favor with God unless we be converted to Him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then He will cause His face to shine upon us. No conversion to God but by His own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to Him (Hos. 5:4), and then pray earnestly for His grace. *Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned*, pleading that gracious promise (Prov. 1:23). *Turn you at My reproof, behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you.* H.

8. We have here (vs. 8-16) a beautiful parable, or shall we call it an allegory, admirably sustained throughout, in which Israel, brought forth from Egypt, is a vine transplanted from that soil to Canaan, and there under Divine culture for a long time prosperous, but at this present writing sadly desolate. Part of the beauty of the parable consists in the apt choice of the Hebrew words, *e.g.*, the verb "hast brought," *i.e.*, a vine, might suggest the transplanting of a vine, or somewhat more readily, the moving of a nomadic caravan across a desert with allusion to Israel on his way to Canaan. "Thou didst root out the heathen," pulling them out by the roots to make room for this vine in Canaan. Thus room was made all round about for its luxuriant growth till Israel (under David and Solomon) had finally possessed all the land promised to their fathers. C.

10. The spreading nature of the boughs of the cedar-tree is here called in aid of the description of the vine, first made use of to illustrate the rapid growth and luxuriance of Israel, but which seemed not sufficient to the Psalmist to denote the great ascendancy of the moral and political power of God's people, which only this stately tree could adequately represent, by its conspicuous majesty and protecting umbrage. *Anon.*

10, 11. One great vine (this is the conception) covered the hills of Palestine with its shadow; its towering boughs were tall like the cedars of God (Hebrew); her branches stretched out to the great sea on the west and to the great river (Euphrates) on the east. These were the natural boundaries of the land promised originally to the patriarchs. C.

12. *Why hast Thou broken down her hedges?* There was a good reason for this change in God's way toward them; this noble vine was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine (Jer. 2:21), to the reproach of its great Owner,

and then no marvel if He took away its hedge (Isa. 5:5); yet God's former favors to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that for all this God would not wholly cast them off. H.

13. *The boar out of the wood doth waste it.* No image of a destructive enemy could be more appropriate than that which is used. We have read of the little foxes that spoil the vines, but the wild boar is a much more destructive enemy, breaking its way through fences, rooting up the ground, tearing down the vines themselves, and treading them under its feet. A single party of these animals will sometimes destroy an entire vineyard in a single night. *J. G. Wood.*

17. The man of Thy right hand.

The Son of man. These striking expressions apply in the fullest and most perfect sense to Christ. If *the man of God's right hand* be the man placed there, to whom can the title apply but to Him? for, "to which of the angels said God at any time, Sit on My right hand?" (Heb. 1:5); and much less has He said this of any Jewish king. As to the other appellation, *The Son of man*, it is one of Christ's most definite titles, being given to Him in Scripture no less than seventy-one times; in sixty-seven instances by Himself; once by Daniel; once by the martyr Stephen; and twice by the Apostle John in the Revelation. He it is, too, whom the Father has made strong for the salvation of His Church, and who will yet turn away captivity from the chosen people, and restore them to a place in the Church, so that henceforth they "*will not go back from God.*" *Anon.*—The perpetuity of the Church, and the perseverance of the saints is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ; and the unfeigned believer may assure himself, as of the continuance of the Church, so of his own perseverance and constant communion with God through Him. "*Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, so will not we go back from Thee.*" *Dickson.*

18. It is in Christ that we abide faithful; because He lives we live also. There is no hope of our perseverance apart from Him. "*Quickened us, and we will call upon Thy name.*" If the Lord gives life out of death, His praise is sure to follow. The Lord Jesus is such a leader that in Him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. S.—If your hearts be cold, prayer is a more likely means to warm them than the omission of it. To ask whether you may pray while your hearts are cold and backward, is to ask whether you may labor or

come to the fire before you are warm. God's Spirit is more likely to help you in duty than in the neglect of it. *Baxter*.—To depend upon feeling in religion is unsafe and dangerous. A man may as well think of holding fast to the clouds, building upon running sand, or relying on the wind. The clouds, the sand, the wind, are no more changeable and uncertain than our feelings. A change in circumstances, or a change in health, or a change in friends, will often produce an equal change in feeling. Our religion should be like the sun, which, cloud or no cloud, goes on in its shining course ; like the earth which, wind or no wind, rolls on its orbit. We should "stand by faith," "live by faith," and "hold fast the profession of our faith." *Bates*.

Using the word prayer to comprise all devotional contemplations and ascriptions as well as beseechings, it is the very cleaving of the loving soul to our Saviour, and is the capital means of growth in grace. "Praying will make us leave off sinning, or sinning will make us leave off praying." Such converse with God, especially over the inspired volume, secures against defection and error, procures pardons, sprinkling of the expiatory blood, and the Spirit of adoption ; mortifies secret, lurking, insidious sins, quickens the pulse of zeal and the pace of service ; arms for battle, lifts the courage, and sweetens the cross. Thus may the new disciple advance day by day, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith ; cleaving unto Jesus, the vital heart,

from whom all the circulation of holy thought, feeling, choice, and act derives its impulse. J. W. A.

18. Quicken us. Restore us to life, give us renewed life (Psalm 71 : 20). The spiritual application of this Psalm reaches the central and most vital truths of religion, the redemption of God's people by the Son of man, and their renovation by His Spirit.

19. O Lord. The name of Jehovah recurs at the close of the Psalm, as though the Psalmist felt that his prayer was accepted in virtue of the covenant which that word represents. *Cook*.

18, 19. Thy right hand being once more upon us in mercy and in power, we will no more apostatize from Thee. Give us life from the dead ; put new life, even Thine own life, into us, and we will call upon Thy name. The closing refrain adds the word Lord, *i.e.*, Jehovah, to the form as in v. 7, heightening the strength and endearment of the sacred name by this addition—our covenant-keeping God, the changeless and ever-faithful One. C.—Here we have another advance in the title and the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the I AM is introduced. Faith's day grows brighter as the hours roll on ; and her prayers grow more full and mighty. "*Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.*" No extremity is too great for the power of God. He is able to save at the last point, and that too by simply turning His smiling face upon His afflicted. Oh, to live forever in the light of Jehovah's countenance. S

PSALM LXXXI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO THE GITTITH. A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1 SING aloud unto God our strength :
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
2 Take up the psalm, and bring hither the
timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the psaltery.
3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.
4 For it is a statute for Israel,
An ordinance of the God of Jacob.
5 He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony,
When he went out over the land of Egypt :
Where I heard a language that I knew not.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden :
His hands were freed from the basket.
7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered
thee ;
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder ;
I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.
8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto
thee :
O Israel, if thou wouldst hearken unto me !
9 There shall no strange god be in thee ;

[Selah]

- Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.
 10 I am the LORD thy God,
 Which brought thee up out of the land of
 Egypt :
 Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
- 11 But my people hearkened not to my voice ;
 And Israel would none of me.
- 12 So I let them go after the stubbornness of
 their heart,
 That they might walk in their own counsels.

- 13 Oh that my people would hearken unto me,
 That Israel would walk in my ways !
- 14 I should soon subdue their enemies,
 And turn my hand against their adversaries.
- 15 The haters of the LORD should submit them-
 selves unto him :
 But their time should endure for ever.
- 16 He should feed them also with the finest of
 the wheat :
 And with honey out of the rock should I
 satisfy thee.

THIS Psalm was apparently intended to be sung at one or more of the great national festivals. There has, however, been much difference of opinion as to the particular festival or festivals for which it was originally composed. The Psalm consists of two parts : In the first, the Psalmist summons his nation to the festival, bidding them keep it with loud music and song and every utterance of joy, because it was ordained of God, and instituted under circumstances worthy of everlasting remembrance (vs. 1-5). In the next he abruptly drops his own words. What those circumstances were, what the meaning of God's revelation then given, the people had forgotten ; and it is for him, in his character of prophet, as well as poet, to declare. It is for him to show how that voice from the past had its lesson also for the present ; how every festival was God's witness to Himself ; how it repeated afresh, as it were, in clear and audible accents, the great facts of that history, the moral of which was ever old, and yet ever new. But the Psalmist conveys this instruction with the more imposing solemnity, when, suddenly breaking off his exhortation, he leaves God Himself to speak. It is no more the ambassador ; it is the Sovereign, who appears in the midst of His people, to remind them of past benefits, to claim their obedience on the ground of those benefits, and to promise the utmost bounties of grace, on the condition of obedience for the future (vs. 6-16). There could be no grander conception of the true significance of the religious feasts of the nation than this. They are so many memorials of God's love and power, so many monuments set up to testify at once of His goodness, and of Israel's ingratitude and perverseness, so many solemn occasions on which He comes as King and Father to visit them, to rekindle anew their loyalty and their affection, and to scatter among them the treasures of His bounty. To give this interpretation to the festivals, to put in its true light the national joy at their celebration,

appears to have been the object of the Psalmist. If so, it is a matter of secondary importance what particular festival or festivals were chiefly before his eye. P.

We need not exclude any of the Mosaic festivals. The comprehensive thought is, Come and worship Israel's God with cheerful trust and joyous triumph, in all the ways and times of His appointment. Praise Him exultingly though in the very face of fierce and mighty national foes, for what are they before our own great God ? C.

5. *Joseph* is here put for *Israel*, on account of his pre-eminence during the residence in Egypt. *He set it*, i.e., God instituted or ordained the festival. *In his coming*, at the time, or in the very act, of his departure. *Over the land of Egypt* includes the usual expression, *from or out of it*, but suggests the additional ideas of publicity and triumph. Israel, at the exodus, passed over a considerable tract of the Egyptian territory, and at the same time, as it were, over the heads of the humbled and terrified Egyptians. A.

Language knew not. Delitzsch would explain the expression by reference to Ex. 6 : 2, etc. "It was the language of a known and yet unknown God, which Israel heard from Sinai. God now revealed Himself to Israel in a new character, not only as the Redeemer and Saviour of His people from their Egyptian bondage, but also as their King, giving them a law which bound them together as a people, and was the basis of their national existence." The latter interpretation, which regards the language here spoken of as the voice of God, and as virtually given in the following verses, is now that most commonly adopted. It is that of Mendelssohn, Ewald, Delitzsch, and Hupfeld.

6. The words of God follow without any indication of a change of speakers. The prophet identifies himself with, and becomes the organ of, the Divine voice. He reminds Israel of

that fact in connection with which the festival was instituted. It is as though, amid all the gladness of the feast, and all the music and the pomp of its celebration, other thoughts arose, not to check, but to guide the current of a holy exultation. The sound of trumpet and timbrel and sacred song must be hushed, while Jehovah speaks to tell His forgetful people the lesson of their past history associated with that festival, the warning and the expostulation suggested by their own perverseness. If they would praise Him aright, it must be with hearts mindful of His goodness, and sensible of their own unworthiness and ingratitude. For the spirit in which all festivals should be kept, see on the offering of the first-fruits (Deut. 26 : 1-11). P.

Verse 6 refers to the relief which God gave to the enslaved, hard-tasked people in Egypt. "I removed his shoulder from under the heavy burden ; his hands passed out from under the basket," in which they bore brick and mortar for building. C.—The idea is borrowed from Ex. 6 : 6, 7. The specific reference is no doubt to the carrying of bricks and mortar, and the pot or basket of the next clause is the vessel used for that purpose, the form of which has been found delineated in a burial-vault at Thebes. A.

7. *Selah* ; mark that ; compare God's goodness and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other. Now if they, on their solemn feast-days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we on the Christian Sabbath to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, from worse than Egyptian bondage, and the many gracious answers He has given to us notwithstanding our manifold provocations. H.—The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin ; great is the mercy of our God ; let us reflect upon both and pause awhile. "*Selah*." Hurried reading is of little benefit ; to sit down awhile and meditate is very profitable. S.

8, 9. How gladly, saith their God, would I testify My love to thee, presenting My appeals and claims, if only thou wilt hearken. "Strange god"—any god other than their own, a heathen, false god. It was their crying, damning sin that they would accept the gods and the worship of the heathen nations round about—Phœnicia and Syria. C.

No man can be without his god. If he have

not the true God to bless and sustain him, he will have some false god to delude and to betray him. The Psalmist knew this, and therefore he joined so closely, forgetting the name of our God and holding up our hands to some strange god. For every man has something in which he hopes, on which he leans, to which he retreats and retires, with which he fills up his thoughts in empty spaces of time ; when he is alone, when he lies sleepless on his bed, when he is not pressed with other thoughts ; to which he betakes himself in sorrow or trouble, as that from which he shall draw comfort and strength—his fortress, his citadel, his defence ; and has not this good right to be called his god ? Man was made to lean on the Creator ; but if not on Him, then he leans on the creature in one shape or another. The ivy cannot grow alone ; it must twine round some support or other ; if not the goodly oak, then the ragged thorn ; round any dead stick whatever, rather than have no stay or support at all. It is even so with the heart and affections of man ; if they do not twine around God, they must twine around some meaner thing. *Trench.*—Dost thou love riches more than God ? It is the mammon of unrighteousness that is thy god. Is it pleasures thou lovest more than God ? Then pleasures are thy god. Is it a husband or wife thou lovest more than God ? Then it is thy husband or wife that is thy god. Is it thy children, thy liberty, thy health, thy credit, thy sins, thy life, that thou lovest more than the great God ? These are thy gods, these are the deities thou worshipping ! *Bishop Beveridge.*

10. *Open thy mouth wide*, literally, *widen it*. The supply of food is here put for that of all necessities. The reason here suggested for adhering to Jehovah is, that He not only had delivered them from Egypt, but was abundantly able to provide for them in Canaan and the wilderness. A.

The great promise was, that God Himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon Him for (Deut. 4 : 7). That if they would adhere to Him as their powerful Protector and Ruler, they should always find Him their bountiful Benefactor. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, as the young ravens that cry open their mouths wide, and the old ones fill them. What is our duty ? To raise our expectations from God and enlarge our desires toward Him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in Him ; why, therefore, should we be straitened in our own bosoms ? What is God's

promise? I will fill thy mouth with good things (103 : 5). *There is enough in God to fill our treasures* (Prov. 8 : 21), *to replenish every hungry soul* (Jer. 31 : 25), to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit and never satisfy (Isa. 55 : 2); Divine pleasures will satisfy and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God if we pray for it in faith. *Ask and it shall be given you; He gives liberally and upbraids not.* God assured His people Israel that it should be their own fault if He did not do as great and kind things for them as He had done for their fathers. Nothing should have been thought too good, too much, to give them, if they would but have kept close to God. H.

No words can be more plain than these: "Open thy mouth wide; I will fill it," but their beauty and pertinence are better seen if we suppose the writer thinks of the little nestlings, late from the egg—eyes still closed, but ears quick to notice any one's approach, and sure to open wide their mouth for the food their instincts look for from the mother bird. So let God's children do, for they are almost as powerless to distinguish good from evil as the eyeless nestlings, and have quite as much reason as they to accept all that God drops into their open mouths as being the best things possible in their case. Moreover, let them enlarge their heart and make broad their requests, remembering that when God's children ask favors of Him, they are never straitened in God, but only in themselves. C.—Surely this teaches us that the greater and more valuable the blessings which we implore from the Divine beneficence, the more sure shall we be to receive them in answer to prayer. Men may cry to God for inferior things, and apply in vain. Even good men may ask for temporal blessings, and not receive them; because the things we suppose good may *not* be good, or not good *for us*, or not good for *us at present*. But none shall seek God for the best of blessings in vain. If we ask *enough*, we shall have it. *J. Ryland.*

You may easily over-expect the creature, but you cannot over-expect God. Widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honors God when we greaten our expectation upon Him; it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts. *T. Case.*—If the matter and manner of our prayer be right, we cannot be too confident in our expectations from him. Open thy mouth wide then, O Chris-

tian; stretch out thy desires to the uttermost, grasp heaven and earth in thy boundless wishes, and believe there is enough in God to afford thee full satisfaction. Not only come, but come with boldness to the throne of grace; it is erected for sinners, even the chief of sinners. Come to it then, and wait at it, till you obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Those who expect most from God are likely to receive the most. The desire of the righteous, let it be ever so extensive, shall be granted. *Beddome.*

Better to believe too much than too little, when God has commanded us to try Him, to prove Him, to open wide our mouths, to ask, seek, and knock. If it be an error to prescribe how and when God shall give, an equally great error is not to believe that He *will* give, and not to ask for the great things he has said He would give. *Potts.*

The soul is more spiritually affected with its own condition by laying it open before the Lord; more deeply sensible of sin, and ashamed in his sight, in confessing it before Him; more dilated and enlarged to receive the mercies sued for; as the *opening wide of the mouth* of the soul that it *may be filled*; more disposed to observe the Lord in answering; and to bless Him and trust on Him upon the renewed experiences of His regard to its distresses and desires. *Leighton.*

When we present our requests for a larger measure of His grace we may safely let forth all the ardor and vehemence of our spirits, since our desires are fixed upon what is the very knot and juncture where the honor of God and the interests of His creatures are indissolubly united. Desires after grace are, in fact, desires after God; and how is it possible they can be too vehement or intense, when directed to such an object? His gracious presence is not like the limited goods of this life, fitted to a particular crisis, or adapted to a special exigency in a fluctuating scene of things; it is alike suited to all times and seasons, the food of souls, the proper good of man under every aspect of Providence, and even the exchange of worlds. *My soul*, said David, *panteth after God, yea, for the living God. My soul followeth hard after Thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me.* *R. Hall.*

Christ's mercy, like water in a vase, takes the shape of the vessel that holds it. On the one hand, His grace is infinite, and "is given to every one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ"—with no limitation but His own unlimited fulness; on the other hand, the amount which we practically receive from that inexhaustible store is, at each successive mo-

ment, determined by the measure and the purity and the intensity of our faith. On His part there is no limit but infinity, on our sides the limit is our capacity, and our capacity is settled by our desires. His word to us ever is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." A. M.

See here, then, what prayer is and what prayer does, its nature and its power. It is a longing after God, which nothing short of the full enjoyment of God can satisfy. And as for its power, it can do all things. It knows no other bounds than the good of the sinner on the one hand, and the omnipotence of Jehovah on the other. "Open thy mouth wide," the Lord says, "and I will fill it." "Ye shall ask what ye will," says Christ, "and it shall be done." The pardon of all our sins, free, complete, and eternal; a victory over every lust; the presence of God with us all through this dark world; His glory passing before our eyes, and shining into our hearts; guidance, protection, strength; heavenly consolations while we live, and heaven itself when we die—all are within the reach of prayer; within our reach; nay, held up, as it were, before our face, with this inscription shining on them all, "Ask, and ye shall have." "Mercies purchased, prepared, waiting for praying man." C. B.

Give up yourselves, then, in pure and undivided surrender, with the devotion and trust of your whole heart, to your Lord and God, to your Father in heaven, who promises to give you the kingdom and its righteousness, as the food and raiment of your new and inner man. As He gives us also He expects. Empty yourselves and He will fill you. The fundamental promise, I am the Lord thy God! bears with it the fundamental command, None other shalt thou serve! Neither *can* this be otherwise, whether in respect to God or to man; the majesty of God, which will not tolerate any rival near Him, demands the whole heart as it is due; and again the need and the desire of the human heart can only find satisfaction in the simplicity and purity of dependence upon the highest, perfect, and only good. *Stier.*

11. "*Would none of me*" is scarcely modern English. The Hebrew means: Would not obey me; were *not willing* as toward me. They were simply perverse, rebellious. Historically, this had a fearfully wide application. It was true of the masses that came out of Egypt; it became painfully apparent during the time of the Judges and in the age after the revolt under Jeroboam. C.—It was not because they might not, they were fairly invited into cove-

nant with God; it was not because they could not, for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart; but it was purely because they would not. God calls them His people, for they were bought by Him, bound to Him, His by a thousand ties, and yet even they have not hearkened, have not obeyed; Israel, the seed of Jacob My friend, set Me at nought, and *would have none of Me*. All the wickedness of the wicked world is owing to the wilfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious is because they will not be so. H.

12. "*So*," in the sense of *consequently, i.e., because of* their perverseness, I sent them forth from Me; I thrust them away for the perverseness of their heart. The centuries of long forbearance came to an end at last, and God gave up first the northern kingdom and then at last the southern also to captivity and desolation. They would not have Jehovah for their God, but would have Baal and Moloch; so God gave them up to their own perverseness, and consequently to national ruin. This is the law of His moral kingdom with individual sinners no less than with nations. C.

I gave them up and they walked in their own counsels. That was to give them up to a spirit of division, to a spirit of discontent, to a spirit of envy and jealousy, to a spirit of ambition, of self-seeking and emulation, and so to a spirit of distraction and confusion, and so to ruin and destruction. Such and no better is the issue when God gives a people up to their own counsels; then they soon become a very chaos, and run themselves into a ruinous heap. As good have no counsel from man, as none but man's. *Caryl.*—*They would none of Me, so I gave them up;* let them take their course; and see what follows, they walked in their own counsels; in the way of their heart and in the sight of their eye, both in their worship and in their conversation. I left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill; they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God and His advice. God therefore was not the Author of their sin, He left them to the lusts of their own hearts and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well the blame must lie upon their own hearts and the blood upon their own heads. H.

This life is a course of trial, proof, and preparation for a lasting state of good or evil beyond the grave. God having put it in our power to choose for ourselves, leaves it to ourselves to make the choice, at the same time plainly warning us that if we choose the right path and fol-

low it on, He will help us, but if we choose the wrong path and refuse to listen to His voice, He will, however unwillingly, give us up, leave us to go our own way. *Anon.*—The same will the Spirit do upon our rejecting or resisting of His leading. He may long strive, but He will “not always strive.” If the person led shall once begin to struggle with Him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow His guidance, what is then to be done but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes Him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more. *Ja-combe.*

13. God looks upon them with pity, and shows that it was with reluctancy that He thus abandoned them to their folly and fate. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* (Hos. 11 : 8, 9.) So here, *O that My people had hearkened!* Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem, *If thou hadst known!* H.—God speaks as if He were comforted when He is but heard, or as if we comforted Him when we hear Him. God beseecheth us, and speaks entreaties to us that His counsels and commands may be heard: *“O that My people had hearkened unto Me.”* The Lord tells them indeed it would have proved their consolation (v. 14): *“I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries.”* Yet while He speaks so pathetically He seems to include His own consolation in it as well as theirs. *“O that My people had hearkened unto Me;”* it would have been good for them, and it would have given high content to myself. *Caryl.*

The tender affection of God in pleading with men to avoid sin is very impressive; but more impressive still are His exclamations of grief when the final step has been taken, and when, for many, recovery is impossible. Thus when Jesus looked down from Olivet upon the guilty metropolis, and knew that the die was cast, He nevertheless wept and said, “How often would I have gathered your children, as a hen her brood; but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!” So God here speaks, “O that My people had hearkened unto Me! that Israel had walked in My ways!” The measure of God’s love transcends all known limits; its forms are infinite in their variety!

When every remedial measure has been tried in vain love can only weep. D. D.

14. Turned My hand. God expresseth the utter overthrow of the enemies of His people by the *turning of a hand*; if God do but turn His hand they are soon subdued. If He do but touch the might, the pomp, the greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of His Church, presently they fall to the ground; a touch from the hand of God will end our wars. *Caryl.*

15. If it was only in being governed by God that the people of Israel could escape bondage, be lifted up and be noble and free, then beyond doubt the same is true of ourselves; we, too, shall be slaves as long as we are free, and shall only be free when we become in heart and soul the servants of God. *Bishop Goodwin.*

16. When once a people or a person are accepted of God, He spares no cost, nor thinks anything too costly for them. *“He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.”* I would not have fed thee with wheat only, that’s good; but with the finest wheat, that’s the best. Surely God cannot think anything of this world too good for His people, who hath not thought the next world too good for them; certainly God cannot think any of these outward enjoyments too good for His people, who hath not thought His Son too good for His people; that’s the apostle’s argument (Rom. 8 : 32): “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” even the best of outward good things, when He seeth it good for us. *Caryl.*—When God’s people walk in the light of His countenance and maintain unsullied holiness, the joy and consolation which He yields them are beyond conception. To them the joys of heaven have begun even upon earth. They can sing in the ways of the Lord. The spring of the eternal summer has commenced with them; they are already blest, and they look for brighter things. This shows us by contrast how sad a thing it is for a child of God to bring his soul into a state of famine by following after another god. O Lord, forever bind us to Thyself alone and keep us faithful unto the end! S.

PSALM LXXXII.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

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| <p>1 God standeth in the congregation of God ;
He judgeth among the gods.</p> <p>2 How long will ye judge unjustly,
And respect the persons of the wicked ?</p> <p>3 Judge the poor and fatherless :
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.</p> <p>4 Rescue the poor and needy :
Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.</p> | <p>5 They know not, neither do they understand ;
They walk to and fro in darkness :
All the foundations of the earth are moved.</p> <p>6 I said, Ye are gods,
And all of you sons of the Most High.</p> <p>7 Nevertheless ye shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes.</p> <p>8 Arise, O God, judge the earth :
For thou shalt inherit all the nations.</p> |
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THIS Psalm is a solemn rebuke, addressed in prophetic strain, to those who, pledged by their office to uphold the law, had trampled upon it for their own selfish ends. It is a "vision of judgment," in which no common offenders are arraigned, as it is no earthly tribunal before which they are summoned. God Himself appears, so it seems to the prophet, taking His stand in the midst of that nation whom He had ordained to be the witness of His righteousness, among the rulers and judges of the nation who were destined to reflect, and as it were to embody in visible form, the majesty of that righteousness. He appears now not, as in the fiftieth Psalm, to judge His *people*, but to judge *the judges* of that people; not to reprove the congregation at large for their formality and hypocrisy, but to reprove the rulers and magistrates for their open and shameful perversion of justice.

As in the presence of God, the Psalmist takes up his parable against these unjust judges: "How long will ye judge a judgment which is iniquity (such is the exact force of the original), and accept the persons of the ungodly?" These men have scandalously desecrated their office. They had been placed in the loftiest position to which any man could aspire. They were sons of the Highest, called by His name, bearing His image, exercising His authority, charged to execute His will, and they ought to have been, in their measure, His living representatives, the very pattern and likeness of His righteousness and wisdom. But instead of righteousness they had loved unrighteousness. They had shown favor to the wicked who were

powerful and wealthy. They had crushed the poor, the defenceless, the fatherless, whose only protection lay in the unsullied uprightness and incorruptibility of the judge, and whom God Himself had made their charge. A witness of these wrongs, the Psalmist appeals to them to discharge their duty faithfully and uprightly: "Do justice to the miserable and fatherless," etc. (vs. 3, 4). But the appeal is in vain. They have neither feeling nor conscience. Morally and intellectually, intellectually because morally, they are corrupt. The light that is in them is darkness. And thus, venal, unscrupulous, base, hard-hearted, the judges and magistrates have loosened the bonds of law, and the consequence is that the foundations of social order are shaken, and the whole fabric threatened with dissolution. Such is the terrible picture of a disorganized society, the very fountains of justice defiled and poisoned, suggested to us by the words in which the Psalmist here addresses the judges of Israel. He himself had thought, he tells us, that their high dignity and the representative character of their office, placed them so far above other men that they were like beings of a different race; but he warns them that the tyrannous exercise of their power will not last forever, that, as in the case of other rulers of the world, it may only accelerate their fall. And then, finally, he turns to God, and appeals to Him who is the Judge, not of Israel only, but of the world, to arise and execute judgment in the earth, which they who bore His name had perverted. The language of the Psalm is so general that it might belong to any period of the history; and the

history itself and the utterance of the prophets show us that the evil here denounced was not the evil of any one age, but of all. P.

Asaph denounces the injustice, corruption, and ignorance of the judges of Israel, and threatens them with destruction. In the first verse he represents the Almighty as sitting in judgment, in the last he calls on Him to judge the earth. The Psalm has bold and remarkable expressions, and the style is pure, compact, and vigorous, but there are no certain indications of date. It may have been written under one of the kings of Judah, either by the elder Asaph at a period of general corruption, as in the reign of Rehoboam; or by a descendant bearing the same name, on the eve of a vigorous reformation, such as that ushered in by Asa, and accomplished by Jehoshaphat (see 2 Chr. 15 : 8-19 ; 19 : 4-11). Cook.

This Psalm rebukes corrupt judges, putting in strong light their high responsibility as vicegerents of God and therefore held accountable before Him for the faithful administration of justice. True to the nature of the case, this Psalm assumes that laws and tribunals exist for the benefit of those who need them for the protection of their rights, *i.e.*, for the poor, the helpless, the friendless. Let all judges, and indeed legislators also, know and forget it not, that God's sympathies are with these dependent classes, and He will surely hold civil officers to their responsibilities toward these needy ones. If they take the place of God, either in making or in administering civil law, let them take care that they use their high powers in sympathy with their Supreme Master and never in defiance of His throne. C.

1. Earthly rulers and judges are not, as they are too ready to think, supreme, independent, irresponsible. There is one higher than the highest. As Jehoshaphat reminds the judges of Israel, God is with them in the judgment. P.—*Among the gods.* An allusion to a singular usage of the Pentateuch, according to which the theocratical magistrates, as mere representatives of God's judicial sovereignty, are expressly called *Elohim*, the plural form of which is peculiarly well suited to this double sense or application. (See Ex. 21 : 6 ; 22 : 7, 8, and compare Deut. 1 : 17 ; 10 : 17 ; 2 Chr. 19 : 6.) Even reverence to old age seems to be required on this principle (Lev. 19 : 32), and obedience to parents in the fifth commandment (Ex. 20 : 12), which really applies to all the offices and powers of the patriarchal system, a system founded upon natural relations, and originating in a simple extension of domestic or

parental government, in which the human head represents the original and universal parent or progenitor. The remarkable use of the name *God* in Exodus is concealed from the reader of the English Bible by the arbitrary use of the word *judges*, as a translation of the Hebrew, which of course it cannot be. *He judges*, will judge, is about to judge. The idea is, that as the judges were gods to other men, so He would be a judge to them. A.

Gods, not merely as having their authority from God, but as His vicegerents, as embodying in themselves the majesty of the law, as those in whom men look to find the most perfect earthly pattern of Divine attributes, of truth and justice and mercy and impartiality. This name "gods" is applied to the judges of Israel in the Pentateuch. It was in connection with the office of judge that the stamp of divinity was most conspicuous. "The judgment is God's" (Deut. 1 : 17) ; whoever comes before it comes before God. So, again, Moses uses the phrase, "When ye come to *me*, to inquire of *God*" (Ex. 18 : 15). P.

It may be said of every magistrate that he sits in God's seat. God has put upon him a portion of His own dominion and authority ; and has ordained that He is to be obeyed, not for wrath's sake only, but for conscience' sake. The civil magistrate, in discharging his high function, may justly claim to govern with a Divine right. No one needs to be told that this old doctrine of the Divine right of rulers has been woefully abused. Sycophantic divines have often made of it a flattering unction for the ears of princes ; teaching them that they owed no obedience to the laws ; that they were responsible to none but God for their administration ; that any attempt on the part of the people to curb their tyranny, or to depose them from their seats when milder measures failed, was rebellion against God whose vicegerents they were. Even now, the same doctrine occasionally makes itself heard from the pulpit and the press ; and thus men attempt to subject the consciences of the people to the caprice of tyrants. Let it be carefully observed that the harp of Asaph lends no sanction to this "right Divine of kings to govern wrong." If the prophet testifies that princes are gods, he includes in the honor the humblest magistrate. The elders administering justice in the gate of Bethlehem, though their town be little among the thousands of Judah, sit in God's seat as truly as King Solomon on his ivory throne in the porch of judgment at Jerusalem. The common saying that "the Divine right of kings

is the Divine right of constables," is a rough way of expressing a Bible truth. Let this be borne in mind, and no one will allege Scripture in defence of royal claims to indefeasible and irresponsible authority, or claim for such authority the sanction of Divine right. But while care ought to be taken to guard the Divine right of civil government from abuse, the right itself is not to be forgotten. The State is an ordinance of God, having, like the family, its foundation in the very constitution of human nature. The officers of the State, whether supreme or subordinate, have a Divine right to administer justice in the community over which Providence has placed them. They who resort to the civil magistrate for judgment, resort to the judgment-seat of God; just as they who resort to the Ministry of the Word resort to the Great Prophet of the Church. Unless the magistrate had received a commission from God, he could not lawfully bear the sword. To take the life of an unarmed fellow-man, without a commission from the Most High warranting the act, would be to commit murder. *W. Binnie.*

2. This and the rest of the Psalm is addressed by Asaph, in the name of the God of judgment, to the unrighteous judges of Israel. The evils are those denounced by all the prophets. "Accept the persons," a common expression for undue partiality. *Cook.*—It is usual to consider what follows, to the end of v. 6, as the words of God as He appears, in vision, pleading with the judges of His people. To me it seems preferable to regard the passage as a rebuke addressed, in the true prophetic strain, by the poet himself, to those whose iniquity called for the protest (somewhat in the same strain as in 58 : 1, 2); v. 6 in particular is thus more forcible, and the address to God in v. 8. P.

The highest philological authorities are now agreed that the primary idea is that of accepting one man's face or person rather than another's, the precise form of expression being probably derived from the practice of admitting suitors to confer with governors or rulers face to face, a privilege which can sometimes only be obtained by bribes, especially, though not exclusively, in Oriental courts. A.—They not only accepted the persons of the rich, because they were rich, though that is bad enough, but (which is much worse) they *accepted the persons of the wicked*, because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Woe unto

thee, O land, when thy judges are such as these! H.

3, 4. The touchstone of magistrates' justice is in the causes and cases of the *poor, fatherless, afflicted, and needy*, who are not able to attend long their suits of law, have no friends nor money to deal for them; to whom, therefore, the judges should be eyes to direct them and a staff to their weakness, to support and help them in their right. *Dickson.*—Persons such as these most of all need the protection of the judge. Their very existence depends on his integrity. The orphan who has lost his natural protectors, the humble who have no powerful friends, the poor who can purchase no countenance, to whom shall they look but to God's vicegerent? And if he violates his trust, God who is the "God of the widow and the fatherless" (68 : 6), and who in the law declares, "Cursed be he who perverteth the cause of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow" (Deut. 27 : 19), will not leave him unpunished.

5. It is one strain continued, only that now the infatuation, as before the moral perversion, of the judges is described. The expostulation falls dead without an echo. The men are infatuated by their position, and blinded by their own pride. P.

All the foundations of the earth are out of course. When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in due course of law the world is indeed out of course. When "justices' justice" becomes a by-word, it is time that justice dealt with justices. S.

6. *I have said, gods (are) ye, and sons of the Highest all of you.* Their sin did not consist in arrogating to themselves too high a dignity, but in abusing it by malversation, and imagining that it relieved them from responsibility, whereas it really enhanced it. They were God's representatives, but for that very reason they were bound to be pre-eminently just and faithful. A.

Our Lord appeals to this verse in His argument with the Jews when they charged Him with blasphemy, "because He, being a man, made Himself God" (John 10). How could they charge Him with blasphemy in claiming to be *the Son of God*, when their own judges had been styled *gods*? They moreover were *unrighteous* judges, whereas He was one whom the Father had *sanctified*, and sent into the world, and whose life and works were a witness to His righteousness. By nature they had no

right to the name of Elohim, "gods," nor had they proved themselves worthy of it by their character. He was in character as in nature Divine. To them *the word of God had come*, by which they had been appointed to their office. He was *Himself the Word of the Father*. Their office was but for a time, they were mortal men, yet wearing, by Divine permission, a Divine name. He had been with the Father before He came into the world, was by Him sealed and set apart and sent to be not a judge, but the Christ; not one of many sons, but emphatically the Son of God, the King of an everlasting kingdom. Both in His office and in His person He has far more right to the title "Son of God," than they have to that of "gods." P.

The argument is valid, notwithstanding the different sense of the word *God* in the two applications, because the difference of sense corresponds to a difference of nature and position in the persons to whom the title is applied. Still this observation should be connected with one general reflection upon the religion of the Old Testament. Biblical monotheism has nothing in common with the cold dead deism which Jewish orthodoxy had extracted from the sacred books. The petrified monotheism which forms the connecting link between actual Judaism, Christian rationalism, and Mohammedanism, is but a gross caricature of scriptural thought. Every theocratic function exercised in the name of Jehovah, who conferred it, placed him to whom it was confided in living relation with the Most High, and made him an organ of His influence. Hence such a man—whether king, judge, or prophet—became the precursor of One who, by His incarnation, was to abolish the separation between God and His creature (Zech. 12: 8). The Old Testament, then, is in full advance toward the incarnation. This is at the root of the argument of our Lord. If this advance has nothing blasphemous, the final point to which it consistently tends can have nothing derogatory to the Divine Majesty. Asaph, addressing himself to the Theocratic Judges (v. 1), describes their sublime function as organs of Divine justice. God Himself sits in the midst of them, and from Him their sentences emanate. Vs. 2, 5, Asaph opposes the sad reality to the ideal grandeur of their functions. At v. 6 he returns to the intimation of v. 1, that of official dignity, and the phrase, "*I have said, Ye are gods*," refers to Asaph's own expression in v. 1, for clearly the *second* term, *God* (v. 1), includes the person of Judges. Vs. 7 and 8 remind judges that one day they will be judged themselves. Jesus draws from

the language of the Psalmist a conclusion *a minori ad majus* (from the less to the greater). The basis of this reasoning is the principle that Scripture cannot blaspheme. By those "to whom the Word of God came," Jesus signifies the Judges, to whom the Holy Spirit addresses Himself in the words which He has just cited. The expression, "The Scripture cannot be broken," shows the boundless confidence which Jesus reposed in Scripture. *Godet*.

7. Though I have called you "gods" and children of the Most High, yet be not elated; do not dream of being immortal for this earth, or of being above responsibility to the Most High; for ye shall surely die like frail man, made of the ground. And that death will bring you before the dreadful bar of Him whose law you have trampled down; whose heart of love for the poor you have outraged; whose hottest retribution you have brought down on your own guilty heads! C.

Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. The meditation of death would pull down the plumes of pride; thou art but dust animated; shall dust and ashes be proud? Thou hast a grassy body, and shall shortly be mowed down: "*I have said, ye are gods*;" but lest they should grow proud, he adds a corrective: "*Ye shall die like men*;" ye are dying gods. *T. Watson*.—He tells them their honor, but withal their lot. In power and place they differ from others; in death they differ not from others. They are cold when winter comes, withered with age, weak with sickness, and melt away with death, as the meanest; all to ashes. *T. Adams*.—To every judge this verse is a *memento mori*! He must leave the bench to stand at the bar, and on the way must put off the ermine to put on the shroud. S.

8. *Arise, O God, judge the earth; for Thou art to possess all nations.* This is a petition that, since the representative or delegated judges had proved so unfaithful, God would appear in person and reclaim the powers which had been so wickedly abused. And this He is besought to do, not only in Israel, where the proximate occasion of the prayer was furnished, but throughout the earth, over all whose nations He possessed, and was one day to make good, the same hereditary right, *i.e.*, a right continuing unchanged through all successive generations. A.

Thou shalt inherit the nations. This has respect to the kingdom of providence. God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom He pleases, He inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of

them as a man does of his inheritance ; this we are to believe and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much *into the hands of the wicked*, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is (Job 9 : 24). But God has reserved the power to Himself, and overrules them. In this faith we must pray, "*Arise, O God, judge the earth*," appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over Thy people after Thine own heart." There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend, for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. It has respect also to the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth, and that promise is pleaded, that God shall *give*

Him the heathen for His inheritance. Thou, O Christ, shalt *inherit all nations*, and be the Governor over them (2 : 8 ; 22 : 28). Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another, in reference to the mismanagements of power among men ; one is (Rev. 19 : 6), *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth* ; the other is (Rev. 22 : 20), *Surely, I come quickly*. H.

The moral lessons of this Psalm for all who have to do with the administration of civil law are too obvious to need remark. Who does not see that if there be a Supreme Being, the doctrine of this Psalm must be true, and being true, is infinitely beneficent in its influence and sublime in its moral grandeur ? C.

PSALM LXXXIII.

A SONG, A PSALM OF ASAPH.

- 1 O God, keep not thou silence :
Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
 - 2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult :
And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
 - 3 They take crafty counsel against thy people,
And consult together against thy hidden ones.
 - 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation ;
That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
 - 5 For they have consulted together with one consent ;
Against thee do they make a covenant :
The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites ;
Moab, and the Hagarenes ;
 - 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek ;
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre :
 - 8 Assyria also is joined with them ;
They have holpen the children of Lot.
- [Selah]
- 9 Do thou unto them as unto Midian ;

- As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the river Kishon :
- 10 Which perished at En-dor ;
They became as dung for the earth.
- 11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb ;
Yea, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna :
- 12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves in possession
The habitations of God.
- 13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust ;
As stubble before the wind.
- 14 As the fire that burneth the forest,
And as the flame that setteth the mountains on fire ;
- 15 So pursue them with thy tempest,
And terrify them with thy storm.
- 16 Fill their faces with confusion ;
That they may seek thy name, O LORD.
- 17 Let them be ashamed and dismayed for ever ;
Yea, let them be confounded and perish :
- 18 That they may know that thou alone, whose name is JEHOVAH,
Art the Most High over all the earth.

THIS Psalm describes a powerful confederation against the kingdom, of which the principal leaders are Edom, Moab, Ammon, certain Arabian tribes, supported by the Philistines,

Tyrians, and Assyrians. The mention of Amalek proves that the Psalm belongs to the period before the captivity, since the Amalekites were destroyed by the Simeonites before that time. Nearly all ancient and many modern commentators (Tholuck, De Wette, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Himpel, Kay) hold that the confederacy of the Moabites and Ammonites and others, described in 2 Chr. 20 : 5-12, gave occasion to the Psalm. The great terror of Jehoshaphat and the people, the express mention of Mount Seir, and the result brought about by a division between the incongruous elements, confirm this view ; nor is it at all impossible that the Psalm may have been written by Jahaziel, " a Levite of the sons of Asaph," who was moved by the Spirit of God to promise a complete deliverance (2 Chr. 20 : 14-17). The mention of the Assyrians, not as leaders, but as encouragers, of the confederacy of the Philistines and Tyrians, will be considered in the notes. We find the Edomites, Philistines, and Arabians active in hostility in the reign of Jehoshaphat's successor. *Cook.*

We know of no period in the history of Israel when all the various tribes here enumerated were united together for the extermination of their enemy. But as this Psalm helps us to complete the narrative in Judges of the defeat of the Midianites (v. 11), so it may itself supplement the narrative of the particular event which called it forth. It may describe some event which we read in the history, but which there assumes less formidable proportions, and in so doing it may help us to complete the picture. If so, there can be very little doubt with what portion of the history it best synchronizes. The confederacy must be that which threatened Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, the account of which is given in 2 Chr. 20. There, as in the Psalm, Moab and Ammon, " the children of Lot," are the leading powers ; and the Edomites are mentioned as forming a part of the invading army. The poet is fully alive to the danger which threatens his nation. Look where he may, the horizon is black with gathering clouds. Judah is alone, and his enemies are compassing him about. The hosts of invaders are settling like swarms of locusts on the skirts of the land. East, south, and west they are mustering to the battle. The kindred, but ever hostile tribe of Edom on the border, issuing from their mountain fastnesses ; the Arab tribes of the desert ; the old hereditary foes of Israel, Moab and Ammon ; the Philistines, long since humbled and driven back to their narrow strip of territory by the sea, yet still apparently for-

midable, even Tyre forgetting her ancient friendship—all are on the march, all, like hunters, are hemming in the lion who holds them at bay. It is against this formidable confederacy that the Psalmist prays. He prays that it may be with them as with the other enemies of Israel, with Jabin and Sisera, in days of old. But he prays for more than deliverance or victory. He prays that the name of Jehovah may be magnified, and that all may seek that name. Two expressions, in fact, give the key to the Psalm—show us the attitude of the poet in presence of the danger : v. 5, " They are confederate against *Thee* ;" v. 18, " Let them know that *Thou* art most high over all the earth."

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions : the first describes the magnitude of the danger, and enumerates the foes who are gathering on all sides, hemming in Judah, and intending by mere force of numbers utterly to crush and destroy it (vs. 1-8). The next contains the prayer for their complete overthrow, with an appeal to God's former mighty acts on behalf of His people when threatened by their enemies (vs. 9-18). P.

TITLE. *A Song. A Psalm. By Asaph.* To the general description (*mizmôr*), there is here prefixed a more specific one (*shîr*), which designates the composition as a song of praise or triumph. The same combination occurs above, in the title of Psalm 48, a composition which was probably occasioned by the victory of Jehoshaphat over the Moabites, Ammonites, and their confederates, as described in 2 Chr. 20. This agrees well with the hypothesis, conclusively maintained by Hengstenberg, that the Psalm before us has relation to the same event, and that as the forty-seventh was probably sung upon the field of battle, and the forty-eighth after the triumphant return to Jerusalem, so the eighty-third was composed in confident anticipation of the victory. A.—Our Psalm is a true picture of the state of feeling which prevailed throughout the people during the danger under Jehoshaphat. According to the history of Chronicles, they praised God at that time, in the midst of their danger, with loud voice (v. 19) ; and here in the title the Psalm is called a *song of praise* ; and it is such in reality, although it bears the form of a *prayer*—a song of triumph sung before the victory—no contest, no doubt, the distress is simply committed to God. *Hengstenberg.*

4. *That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* This desperate scheme and wretched design took not effect ; but, on the

contrary, the several nations mentioned in this conspiracy are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years; while the Jews are still a people, and are preserved in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day (Rom. 11 : 25). So Diocletian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world, but in vain. *Gill.*

5. *Against Thee*, as in v. 3 "against Thy people." God and His people are one. So our Lord says to Saul, "Why persecutest thou Me?"

6-8. The enumeration of the confederate tribes. First, those on the south and east. Then, those on the west, Philistia and Tyre. Lastly, the Assyrians in the north, not yet regarded as a formidable power, but merely as allies of Moab and Ammon. P.—The enemies of Israel, as enumerated by the Psalmist, fall into four main divisions: First, those most nearly connected with the Israelites themselves by the ties of blood-relationship, the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; secondly, the two branches of the descendants of Lot, along with their respective Arabian auxiliaries—viz., the Moabites, who had engaged the assistance of the Hagarenes, and the Ammonites, who had gathered round their standard the Giblites and Amalekites; thirdly, the inhabitants of the coast, the Philistines and Tyrians; fourthly, the more distant Assyrians. *Thrupp.*

8. *Assur is also joined with them.* It was then a rising power, anxious for growth, and it thus early distinguished itself for evil. What a motley group they were! A league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds. *They have holpen the children of Lot.* All these have come to the aid of Moab and Ammon, which two nations were among the fiercest in the conspiracy. There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. S.

9. Here is the prayer. The historic allusions to previous victories over these or similar enemies had in themselves an inspiration of hope. Why shouldest not Thou, O God, re-enact those ancient deliverances of Thy people, and again

overwhelm Thy foes in judgment? As unto the Midianites by the hand of Gideon (Jud. 7); as to Sisera and Jabin (Jud. 4, 5). C.

11. *Oreb and Zeeb*, the two "princes," or probably "generals of the army," while Zebah and Zalmunna have the title of "kings" (Jud. 7 : 25; 8 : 5, 6). The allusions here and in Isa. 10 : 26 help us to complete the narrative in Judges. Isaiah implies that the slaughter must have been awful beyond anything that history records, for "he places it in the same rank with the two most tremendous disasters recorded in the whole of the history of Israel—the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and of the army of Sennacherib." Here the discomfiture and flight of the Midianites is prominent. "In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the Psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing-floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and leap from tree to tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited." (*Grove.*) P.

16-18. The object with which the Psalmist prays for the Divine judgment upon the foes who are gathering to swallow up his people is remarkable. It is "that they may seek the name of Jehovah, that they may know (v. 18) that He is most high over all the earth." This is the nobler aspiration which mingles with the prayer for vengeance. The man who loves and fears Jehovah desires to see others, even his enemies, love and fear Him too. The end of all God's judgments, as of all history, is the same, that all should confess that Jehovah is One, and His name One (Zech. 14 : 9). P.

That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors is, that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this; no other confusion to them than what may be a step toward their conversion. H.

PSALM LXXXIV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO THE GITTITH. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

- 1 How amiable [*lovely*] are thy tabernacles,
O LORD of hosts !
- 2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the
courts of the LORD ;
My heart and my flesh cry out [*sing for joy*]
unto the living God.
- 3 Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where
she may lay her young,
Even thine altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King, and my God.
- 4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house :
They will be still praising thee. [Selah]
- 5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee ;
In whose heart are the high ways to Zion.
- 6 Passing through the valley of Weeping they
make it a place of springs ;
Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.
- 7 They go from strength to strength,
Every one of them appeareth before God in
Zion.
- 8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer :
Give ear, O God of Jacob. [Selah]
- 9 Behold, O God our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.
- 10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thou-
sand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of
my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- 11 For the LORD God is a sun and a shield :
The LORD will give grace and glory :
No good thing will he withhold from them
that walk uprightly.
- 12 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

In its general character this Psalm very nearly resembles Psalm 42. Like that, it is the ardent outpouring of a man of no common depth and tenderness of feeling, the expression of a devoted love for the house and worship of Jehovah. Like that, it is written under circumstances of suffering and depression, at a time when the Psalmist was in exile, or at a distance from the sanctuary. Like that, it touches, and even more fully, on the celebration of the national feast, and pictures the crowd of pilgrims on their way to the holy city. In both Psalms there is the same deep pathos, the same "exquisite delicacy and tenderness of thought," in both the same strain of remembrance and of anticipation, half sad, half joyful. Certain turns of expression are the same in both. Compare v. 2 here with 42 : 1, 2 ; v. 4 here, "they will still (or *yet*) praise Thee," with 42 : 5, "for I shall yet praise Him ;" the name of God as the "living God," v. 2 here, and 42 : 2 (occurring nowhere else in the Psalter) ; the phrase, "appear before God," v. 7 here, and 42 : 2 ; "thy dwellings" or "tabernacles," v. 1 here, and 43 : 3. But there is this difference, that here nothing is said to define exactly the locality in which the Psalm was written ; nor is there any allusion to the taunts of ene-

mies, to "men of deceit and wrong," such as meet us in Psalm 42. The Psalm dwells on the blessedness of God's service in His house (vs. 1-4), the supreme happiness of those who are permitted to take their part in it (vs. 5-7), and asks that the Psalmist himself, though shut out from access to the sanctuary, may nevertheless find God to be his sun and shield (vs. 8-12). P.

It is all through a fervent and tender expression of love for Jehovah's sanctuary ; of love which yearns in the distance to return thither, and pronounces all those blessed who have there their true home. D.—The whole tone of this Psalm is that of *inviting* men to the tabernacle of the Lord. It contemplates their journeying thither, but sees no toils, no discomforts, but only sweet associations and fountains of delight in the very travels up from distant cities to the place of appearing before God in Zion. C.

1. *How dear* (to me are) *Thy dwellings, O Jehovah, (God of) hosts!* The adjective is rendered by the English versions *amiable*, in the sense of the French *aimable*, lovely. But the usage of the Hebrew word requires it to be understood as meaning *dear, beloved*, which is exactly the idea here required by the context. The plural *dwellings* has reference to the sub-

divisions and appurtenances of the sanctuary, and is applied to the tabernacle in Psalm 43 : 3. The Divine titles are as usual significant. While one suggests the covenant relation between God and the petitioner, the other makes His sovereignty the ground of a prayer for His protection. The force of this impassioned exclamation is enhanced by the structure of the sentence, which consists of a single clause. With the whole verse compare Psalm 27 : 1-5. A.

“How amiable”—words which legitimately mean, how worthy of being loved, how lovable in general; but the Hebrew is more definite and personal: How *dear to my heart*—oh, how tenderly do I love the place where Thou dwellest, O Lord of hosts! It is rather an utterance of the heart than a judgment of the intelligence, expressing what one feels for himself rather than what he holds as a general, abstract truth. C.—What made the tabernacle lovely was within; here the priests were to be seen in their robes, doing their duty and service, and at certain times the high-priest in his rich apparel; here were seen the sacrifices slain and offered, by which the people were taught the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ; here the Levites were heard singing their songs, and blowing their trumpets. But much more lovely are the Church of God and its ordinances in Gospel times, where Christ, the Great High-priest, is seen in the glories of His person and the fulness of His grace; where Zion’s priests, or the ministers of the Gospel, stand clothed, being full fraught with salvation and the tidings of it; where Christ is evidently set forth as crucified and slain, in the ministry of the Word and the administration of ordinances; here the Gospel trumpet is blown and its joyful sound echoed forth, and songs of love and grace are sung by all believers; besides, what makes these tabernacles still more lovely are the presence of God, so that they are no other than the house of God, the gate of heaven; the provisions that are here made and the company that is here enjoyed. *Gill*.

What can be more like heaven upon earth than a company of devout souls met in one place, having God in the midst of them and partaking of His communications, devoting themselves to His service, professing their faith and hope in Christ and their dependence upon Him; and joining hearts and voices with the heavenly hosts of angels, in singing the everlasting praises of their Creator and Redeemer; in declaring His wonderful works of love and

mercy, and in adoring His infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, which are conspicuous to all the world? *Archbishop Sharp*.

2. Soul . . . heart . . . flesh. Marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first, *longeth*, means literally, “hath grown pale,” as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, *fainteth*, is more exactly, “faileth,” or “is consumed.” P.—“Longing,” “fainting,” are strong expressions of intense, languishing desire—a feeling that nothing else can at all satisfy. The Hebrew verb for crieth out is used almost if not quite invariably for the shoutings of exultant joy; not for the imploring cry for help. The distinction is important as bearing upon the tone of feeling that pervades the Psalm. C.—The Psalmist reaches the climax of desire not when he speaks of the sanctuary, but of God Himself. Heart and flesh being both mentioned, we are taught that it is the desire of the whole man. In the original there is expectation, eagerness, desire, all concentrated. It is an intensity that drowns all other desires—“crieth out for God.” *A. G. Brown*.

Which one of these hearts is satisfied with what it is? Which of you is content—deeply, thoroughly content—with a decorous and prosperous and cultured career? Is there no crying out, from within, for the living God? Does not the infinite and solemn mystery challenge us from the hours of suffering, and of silence, and even of gladness itself? Does not the very beauty of the earth and the sea and the sky awaken an awful sense of the “light that never was on sea or shore;” and does not society sometimes leave you weary and hungry and cold, and is not the fulness of joy attended by an emptiness that the world with its largest promise cannot fill? Have you not spiritual sensibility enough to feel yet that you are poor and blind and miserable and sinful, before God? These, then, are all inner voices beseeching for the life that is hid with Christ in God. Through all its deepest organs the soul is kept mercifully restless till it tastes of that life. *F. D. H.*

3. “God fails not,” as one has beautifully said, “to find a house for the most *worthless*, and the nest for the most *restless* of birds.” What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all His creatures! We know what the expression of “nest” conveys, just as well as that of “a house.” Is it not a place of security, a shelter

from storm, a covert to hide one's self in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in"? *Anon.*

The Psalmist feels like a wandering bird, homeless, until he finds a refuge in God's house. The latter half of the verse, "even Thine altars," appears rather to be an exclamation, as though the Psalmist would say, "The birds have their houses; my refuge and home, the place in which my heart finds all its comfort, is the altar of God." *Cook.*

It is evidently the design of this passage to intimate to us that in the house and at the altar of God a faithful soul findeth freedom from care and sorrow, quiet of mind, and gladness of spirit, like a bird that has secured a little mansion for the reception and education of her young. And there is no heart endued with sensibility which does not bear its testimony to the exquisite beauty and propriety of this affecting image. *Bishop Horne.*—The points in the analogy are home, rest, and liberty. The house of God, the house of the Father and the elder Brother and all the children, is and must be from its nature a home. All needed rest and comfort is to be found in it. And to the soul in God's house, as to the bird in its nest, there is a happy combination of rest and freedom. A nest is not a cage. There is rest in revealed truth in Christ, in a reconciled God, in holiness; but there is the freedom of a spirit which abides in these, because they are ever true and real to it, and which goes forth at liberty to seek and find all that is good or true. *W. Morison.*

4. The thought of v. 3 is completed. *The* blessedness of God's house is that there men *praise* Him. This it was that made that house so precious to the Psalmist. And what Christian man can climb higher than this—to find in the praise of God the greatest joy of his life? *P.*—If there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continually praising Him. Apply this to His house above; blessed are they that dwell *there*, angels and glorified saints, for they *rest not day or night from praising God*. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity. *H.*

5-7. But not only blessed are they who dwell in the holy place in God's city, and near to His house; blessed are they who can visit it, with the caravan of pilgrims, at the great national festivals. They cherish the remembrance of such seasons. Every spot of the familiar road, every station at which they have

rested, lives in their heart. The path may be dry and dusty, through a lonely and sorrowful valley, but nevertheless they love it. The pilgrim band, rich in hope, forget the trials and difficulties of the way; hope changes the rugged and stony waste into living fountains. The vale blossoms as if the sweet rain of Heaven had covered it with blessings. Hope sustains them at every step; from station to station they renew their strength as they draw nearer to the end of their journey, till at last they appear before God, present themselves as His worshippers, in His sanctuary in Zion. No wonder that in all ages men have rejoiced to find in this beautiful picture an image of the Christian life. To what can that so aptly be compared as to a pilgrimage in a vale of tears? Is it not by the hope of appearing before God in the heavenly Jerusalem that the Christian is sustained? Does he not find fountains of refreshment in the wilderness of the world? Does not God's grace visit him like the sweet refreshing shower from heaven? Does he not advance from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from glory to glory, till he reaches his journey's end? *P.*

5. "Whose strength is in Thee"—not in himself, but in his God alone; who looks to Thee for help at all times, not only in great but in all lesser and all least emergencies. The Gospel writers speak of the same living trust: "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). *C.*—The latter clause is rather obscure, literally, "ways in their heart;" but the meaning appears to be, Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are the ways to Jerusalem, blessed are they whose hearts are full of one thought, that they are drawing nearer to God's house. *Cook.*

6. This is one of the obscurest verses in the book. Interpreters, however, are now commonly agreed as to the first clause. The explanation of *Baca*, as meaning the valley of mulberry or *Baca*-trees, is now very commonly abandoned for the one given in the ancient versions, the vale of weeping or of sorrow, a beautiful poetical description of the present life as one of suffering. To the *fons lacrymarum* is opposed the fountain of salvation or of joy, a figure so familiar in the Scriptures, as to be readily suggested by the one word *spring* or *fountain*. The meaning of the clause, as thus explained, is, that the persons pronounced happy in the foregoing verse convert the very vale of tears into a fountain of delight. *A.*—The words are a figurative expression of the thought

that the Divine blessing accompanies them everywhere, and supplies the means by which they are refreshed on their journey, and so strengthened that they become neither faint nor languid, but even stronger as they advance. The valley through which they are advancing becomes green meadows and pastures, and fruitful fields, by springs and rain. *Moll.*

The vale of weeping. The meaning of the word "Baca" is doubtful, but all the ancient versions render it by "weeping," and according to the Masora it is the same as "Bacah," *weeping*. The meaning of the verse is, that the faith and hope and joy of the pilgrims make the sandy waste a place of fountains, and then (this is the Divine side of the picture) God from heaven sends down the rain of His grace. The word denotes the soft, gentle autumnal rain which fell after the crops were sown. Thus the vale of weeping becomes a vale of joy. *P.*

Deep beneath all the surface agitations of storms and currents there may be the unmoved stillness of the central ocean of peace in our hearts. In the "valley of weeping" we may still be "blessed" if "the ways" are in our hearts, and if we make of the very tears "a well," drawing refreshment from the very trials. With all its sorrows and pains, its fightings and fears, its tribulations in the world, and its chastenings from a father's hand, the life of a Christian is a happy life, and the joy of the Lord remains with His servants. *A. M.*

6, 7. The most gloomy present becomes bright to them; passing through even a terrible wilderness, they turn it into a place of springs, their joyous hope and the infinite beauty of the goal, which is worth any amount of toil and trouble, afford them enlivening comfort, refreshing, strengthening in the midst of the arid steppe. Not only does their faith bring forth water out of the sand and rocks of the desert, but God also on His part lovingly anticipates their love, and rewardingly anticipates their faithfulness; a gentle rain, like that which refreshes the sown fields in the autumn, descends from above and enwraps the valley of Baca in a fulness of blessing, the arid steppe becomes resplendent with a flowery festive garment, not to outward appearance, but to them spiritually in a manner none the less true and real. And whereas under ordinary circumstances the strength of the traveller diminishes in proportion as he has traversed more and more of his toilsome road, with them it is the very reverse; "*they go from strength to strength.*" *D.*

Troubles of the world hinder us not from

approaching the presence of God. They are rather helps, for by this means *we go from strength to strength*, from strength of patience, to strength of hope; from strength of hope, to strength of faith, to strength of vision. *R. Baker.*—It is familiar how bereavements, which are the storms of the soul, prepare the way for religious tranquillity. The majority of trusting disciples were made so under the rough handling of some kind of pain. They had to march, weeping, blinded, through the dry valley of Baca, to find it at last "a well" of living water, and, going from strength to strength, to appear in Zion before God. Resignation is rest; and, to know it, the heart has to be torn by terrible separations—writhing at the new-made grave, heavy among the ruins of fortune, broken over disappointed plans, or unreturned affections. It is humiliating, but real. Tempests must sweep our sky, before the air is still and the summer sunshine calls up the noiseless energies of life. Ask the ministers, the Church records, the secret thanksgivings that rise around the communion-table. They will tell you, as One greater than they told you long before, that crosses bring calmness, that afflictions yield afterward the *peaceable* fruits of righteousness, that the rough, sharp mountains, hard to climb, bring peace; and that the Sabbath temple, the Lord's great house of rest, into which the toilsome nations flow to praise, is built upon their top. *F. D. H.*

Many think themselves to be truly God-fearing when they call this world a valley of tears. But I believe they would be more so, if they called it a happy valley. God is more pleased with those who think everything right in the world than with those who think nothing right. With so many thousand joys, is it not black ingratitude to call the world a place of sorrow and torment? *Jean Paul.*

7. The thought is that every one who with true heart presents himself before God in Zion advances from one stage of spiritual strength to another. It is a way of soul-progress, analogous to the progress made in the journey from one stage to another. *C.*—God makes everything gradual to us, and by present faith everything leading on gently and without violence to the next duty; like the changes of the seasons, imperceptible in their progress from day to day, yet perfect and complete; impossible to bear if they come suddenly, but healthful and delightful in their quiet approaches, and gliding gradually into one another. So duties grow out of duties gradually and gently, and Christian graces and self-denials glide into one an-

other like the braids of a *broken* chain ; and by this chain of love and duty the soul is bound about and strengthened in and for Christ. *Cheever.*

This is the method of life with all of us. Every acquisition is the ground of future conquest. Every gain is only the hope of future gain. "And thus the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "Till we all come to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus." To this the individual, to this the race, shall come. In that future world to which our life is hastening there will be scope for every development. Thither our footsteps and our best ambitions turn ; and surely, even in a "strange land," the going with weariness from strength to strength will be compensated by such a home. *E. P. Hood.*

Appareth before God. This is a standing phrase to denote the approach of the worshipper to the temple of the Lord. The road to the temple from the distant parts of the country was long and taxing to the strength of the pilgrim. It symbolized the path of life, which terminates in the presence of God. And the refreshment which the pilgrim receives at the various stages of the way recruits and augments his strength, so that he is ever becoming better fitted for advancing to the end of his journey. *M.*

The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong ; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to His heavenly kingdom and glory ; troubles shall not overwhelm them, temptations not wholly overcome them, spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb Himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall He be able to say, "Those whom thou hast given Me I have kept, and none of them is lost." "They are all here before God." *W. Makelvie.*
—There they shall rest in security, no more danger, no more doubt, no more conflict, because no more sin. Grace triumphant, guilt removed, indwelling evil eradicated, nothing in habit left but good, and the law of a purified and heavenly nature, as well as the law of

God's promise and covenant in Christ, securing an eternity and immutability of holiness. The song of triumph begun on earth enters into and becomes one with the hallelujahs of heaven. *Cheever.*

8. Having reached the goal of their journey the company of pilgrims pour forth their heart in such expressions of prayer as we find in v. 8. **D.**—The temple was the place, its seasons of festival worship the time pre-eminently for *prayer*. This was their glory. Hence the emphasis of the verse before us. The pious worshipper is called on to pour out his soul in prayer to the Lord God of hosts, the God of Jacob ; this name of the aged patriarch being specially suggestive of struggling, prevailing prayer.

9. This does not mean, Look, O God, upon our shield ; but rather, Do Thou, O God, who art our shield, look on the face of Thine anointed, who is at once our king and thy servant. V. 11 shows that the Lord God is thought of as both "sun" and "shield," the fountain of our light and the arm of our military defence. The prayer is that He would regard with merciful favor the king then on the throne of David, since the prosperity of the whole people hinged upon the Divine mercy toward him. The words are specially pertinent to be *applied under the Gospel to Jesus*, who fills the full idea of Israel's king as the medium of all blessings to God's people. *C.*

Christ is the way to the Father, and the Father's way to us. His name is not a mere musical cadence to a prayer, or a customary close to a collect ; but it is to be the Alpha of our prayer, and its Omega too. He is to be the substance as well as the commencement and end of every prayer ; and it is because of what He has done that we can see a channel by which our prayers shall rise to Deity, and the blessing of Deity shall descend into the heart of humanity. *Cumming.*—We see God in Christ. God sees us in Christ. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. We in Christ are reconciled to God. More and more may we learn to take up and urge, with all the energy of a self-ignoring faith, the cry, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Thine anointed." And the evenness of our joy and the stability of our hope depend upon our keeping our gaze fixed immovably upon that one blessed object upon which the Father's gaze is always fixed. *A. J. Gordon.*

10. Be a door-keeper ; literally, "lie on the threshold," or "busy one's self on the threshold ;" the lowest place, the meanest office in God's

house is a happiness and an honor beyond all that the world has to offer. P.—“Be a door-keeper,” seems to mean precisely, *be on the threshold*, perhaps waiting for admittance, or having only the privilege of glances at the glories within; yet even this I choose before dwelling in the tents of wickedness, with all their luxuries and surroundings. C.

II. *For a sun and a shield is Jehovah, God; grace and glory will Jehovah give; He will not refuse (anything) good to those walking in a perfect (way).* The *for* shows that this verse gives a reason for the preference expressed in that before it. God is here called a sun, as He is called a light in Psalm 27:1. Both these figures represent Him as a source of happiness; that of a shield describes Him as a source of safety, or a strong protector. *Grace and glory* (or *honor*) are related as the cause and the effect. The latter includes all the sensible fruits and manifestations of the Divine favor. A.

This is the only instance in which God is directly called a sun in Holy Scripture. He is called a shield, as being the One who so protects men that they cannot be approached, and a sun, as being the One dwelling in inaccessible light, which, proceeding forth from Him in love to men, specializes itself into the mild and condescending grace and glory of the Father of lights. The highest good is self-communicative. The God of salvation does not withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. Out of His fulness of what is good He freely bestows upon all susceptible ones, *i.e.*, upon all who are willing to receive and capable of receiving. D

“Sun and shield,” dispelling all darkness; supplying all light, warmth, fertility, beauty, everything we need and love that is better than eternal frost and endless night. Our “*shield*,” protecting us evermore from all enemies and guaranteeing our perpetual safety. “Will give grace and glory,” grace here and glory hereafter; spiritual aid and power against all earthly want through all life’s struggles; but the glory of heaven in the eternal future. It is everything to say of Him that He will withhold no good thing from those who sincerely labor to please Him, evermore ordering their way uprightly. C.

The Lord God is a sun conveys a striking and impressive truth, when we think of the sun only in his obvious character as a source of light and heat. But what new energy is given to this magnificent emblem, when we learn from astronomy that He is a grand centre of attraction, and when we, in addition, take in

that sublime generalization that the sun is the ultimate source of every form of power existing in the world! What an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being! W. H. G.—“I am God all-sufficient” (as He said to Abraham)—sufficient for Himself and for all others. Like His emblem, the sun, He has a fulness of light in Himself. Were a thousand million more creatures to crowd the earth, that sun has light and heat for them all; and in God there is a fulness of good infinitely greater than the whole creation or the most capacious of His creatures can require. *Hamilton*.

Will give grace. There is grace in the origin and grace in the execution of the plan of substitutionary atonement; and when the atonement has been made, there is grace in the bestowment, on account of it, of all the blessings, commencing with pardon, of everlasting salvation. Beginning, middle, and end, from eternity to eternity, all is grace. Christ Himself is God’s unspeakable gift, and eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace provides the atonement, and grace, as free as ever, bestows its results! *R. Wardlaw*.—In its wider and its narrower sense, Grace is His *gift*. The whole economy of redemption—the incarnation of the Divine Son, His perfect teaching, His sinless example, His expiatory death, His rising from the grave, His ascension on high, His perpetual pleading in that world beyond the stars—whence is all this but from the free, undeserved bounty of the infinite mercy thus lavished upon us, the children of the Fall? And Grace, in the specific sense of the action of the Holy Spirit, by whom the heart is filled with light and love, and whose work especially it is to knit our frail and perishing nature to the Divine humanity of the Saviour—what is grace in this narrower sense but a free gift from first to last? Assuredly, if there be aught good in us, grace has made us what we are. *Liddon*.

With pardon for sin and the Divine righteousness going with it is the pledge of continuous grace, assured protection, and final victory. God is ever consistent in His purpose, which is to overcome sin in us; and righteous in His character, which never claims anything that we are not reasonably able to perform. Christ died for our sins that we might die unto them. Therefore, we are told to reckon our selves “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Be sure that whatever we need for holiness and victory God has for us in Christ. *Thorold*.

The grace we are encouraged to ask is grace

for *present need*, and not present grace for *future supposed necessities*. Grace to suffer is for a suffering season; grace to die is for dying moments; then, but not before, is the *time of need*. Grace for present duty or trial ought to be the immediate object of our care; grace proportioned to our present necessity; either to subdue our corruptions, to resist temptations, to support us under the afflictions we feel, or to strengthen us for the duties we are called to perform. *R. Walker.*

Grace doth not lie as a sleepy habit in the soul, but will put forth itself in vigorous and glorious actings. Grace can no more be concealed than fire; like new wine, it will have vent. Grace doth not lie in the heart as a stone in the earth, but as seed in the earth; it will spring up into good works. *T. Watson.*

The Lord will give glory. "Man," says a wise author, "is the glory of this lower world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and heaven is the glory of grace." Heaven, or glory, is grace matured and brought to infinite perfection; there we shall see His face and have His name written in our foreheads; and we shall reign with Him forever and ever. *Matthew Wilks.*—I know that Christ Jesus hath prepared room for me. Why may I not, then, with boldness in His blood, step into that glory into which my Head and Lord hath gone before me? The greater sinner I have been, the greater glory will be Thy grace to me unto all eternity. *John Welsh.*

When the personal, positive and eternal power and glory of Christ are revealed, Christian experience becomes as normal and spontaneous as is the response of the earth to the vernal sunshine. Prayer and praise become our natural speech, and fruit-bearing our natural condition, just as June brings the bird-song to the air and the flowers to the field. If we yield to the grace and truth of Christ, life becomes beautiful; death, too, beautiful, for it brings us immortality. It will introduce us to the open vision of our Lord. *R. S. S.*

What a solemn and sublime thought it is that a Christian carries through this world in his heart no smaller possession than the productive seed, which only needs its natural climate and its fostering skies to burst into the unfading flower of endless and perfect glory! Ah! brethren, the truths that people nowadays are sometimes flinging in our faces, as if we did not believe them, such as, "Here or nowhere must a man find his heaven; a man's blessedness consists not in *where* he is, but in *what* he is; heaven must be *within* a man, and not merely

round about him"—all these half-truths, where did they come from? They come from that truth that the Spirit of God in us is the earnest of heaven for us; and he that begins to love, and trust, and rejoice in God here, carries the essence of heaven wheresoever he goes. *A. M.*

The Lord will give grace and glory.

Grace signifies both the good-will of God toward us and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honor which He now puts upon us in giving us the adoption of sons, and that which He has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are God's gift, His free gift. And as, on the one hand, wherever God gives grace He will give glory (for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it), so, on the other hand, He will give glory hereafter to none to whom He does not give grace now, or who receive His grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that *no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly.* *H.*

Great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. The Psalmist does not say, "The Lord gives gifts and glory," but "grace and glory." Grace, not gifts, is a certain forerunner of glory. *Bunyan.*—Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant; grace is glory begun, glory is grace made perfect; grace is the first degree of glory, glory is the highest degree of grace. *Dyer.*—Grace and glory differ, but as the bud and the blossom. What is grace but glory begun? What is glory but grace perfected? *J. Mason.*—The kingdom of grace is the kingdom of glory in commencement; and the kingdom of glory is the kingdom of grace in full, yet ever-growing perfection. *Bishop Jebb.*

These two kingdoms of grace and glory differ not specifically, but gradually; they differ not in nature, but only in degree. The kingdom of grace is nothing but the inchoation or beginning of the kingdom of glory; the kingdom of grace is glory in the seed, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the flower; the kingdom of grace is glory in the daybreak, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the full meridian; the kingdom of grace is glory militant, and the kingdom of glory is grace triumphant. There is such an inseparable connection between these two kingdoms, grace and glory, that there is no passing into the one kingdom but by the other. At Athens there were two temples, a

temple of virtue and a temple of honor; and there was no going into the temple of honor but through the temple of virtue; so the kingdoms of glory and grace are so joined together that we cannot go into the kingdom of glory but through the kingdom of grace. Many people aspire after the kingdom of glory, but never look after grace; but these two, which God hath joined together, may not be put asunder; the kingdom of grace leads to the kingdom of glory. *T. Watson.*

No good will He withhold. Many have lost for God, but none ever lost by God. If they have lost in temporals, they have been eternal gainers. There is a sure rule, *God never takes anything from His people, but He gives them something better in the stead of it.* *J. Mason.*

God oftentimes withholds riches and honors, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly; we may therefore know that honors and riches and bodily strength are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall and the sun to shine. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost in this life; fruition of God's presence and vision of His blessed face in the next, and these good things God never withholds from the godly. *R. Baker.*

Walk uprightly. Among strong, upright and beautiful characters that we have known, none are so strong, so upright, and so beautiful as those where the graces grow on the firm stock of obedience. Goodness is never very good, tenderness is not nobly tender, unless there is conscience under it, principle in it. Fetch back the old Hebrew and Puritanic idea of allegiance and you restore some nobilities that we can ill afford to spare. *F. D. H.*

Whole Verse. The *sun* denotes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity, and the *shield* represents all manner of protection whatsoever; under the name of *grace* all spiritual good is wrapped up, and under the name of *glory* all eternal good is wrapped up; under the last clause of the verse, *no good thing will He withhold*, is wrapped up all temporal good; and all put together declare God to be indeed an all-sufficient portion. *T. Brooks.*

Such a promise as this is simple and clear as light. It needs not so much exposition as belief and application. It is not the promise of one blessing, but of all. It does not so much say what God will do, as declare that there is nothing which He will not do. The Lord God

is a sun and shield; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. Whatever there is in God of help and comfort is herein made over to the believer through Christ Jesus. It contains provision for body and for soul, in life, in death, and in eternity. It covers every instance, addresses itself to every character, and meets every emergency. Resting on the veracity of Jehovah, it needs no proof. Rising beyond all qualification and exception, it requires no elaborate command. *J. W. A.*—In God's perfections, in His assurances and promises, there is enough to content the most longing soul, and to fill with a joy unspeakable and full of glorying. *Hamilton.*

12. And the Psalmist rises at last to the joyful conviction, not only that they are blessed who dwell in God's house (v. 4), or they who swell the festal throng on their way to that house (v. 5), but they who, whether they worship in it or not, are one with Him by faith: "Blessed is the man that *trusteth* in Thee." *P.*

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee. Here is the key of the Psalm. The worship is that of faith, and the blessedness is peculiar to believers. No formal worshipper can enter into this secret. A man must know the Lord by the life of real faith, or he can have no true rejoicing in the Lord's worship, His house, His Son, or His ways. *S.*

Christianity has its specially sacred day, sacred places, and sacred meal; still such is its transforming power that it converts all the days of the week into a Sunday or Sabbath, and every place under the canopy of heaven into a place of worship, and every meal into a sacrament. The whole earth is duly consecrated by the Lord and Bishop of souls. *J. H. Jones.*

He that will meet the king must wait on Him in His walks. Christ's ordinances are Christ's walks; and he that would see the beauty of Christ, and taste of the sweetness of Christ, must wait at wisdom's door, must attend Christ in His own appointments and institutions. When old Barzillai had lost his taste and hearing, he cared not for David's feasts and music; so there are many who, having lost their spiritual taste and hearing, care not for Gospel ordinances. Under a pretence of living above ordinances, they live below ordinances; yea, they scorn, vilify, and condemn Christ's ordinances, that are more worth than heaven and earth. *T. Brooks.*

How many persons go to church who never

go to God ! How many sing hymns and never praise, hear truths and never heed, touch promises and never pray ! *H. S. Carpenter.*—The man who sees most of God in nature and comes closest to Him among the mountains and out under the stars will be he who has first felt the strange presence of His Spirit at the altar. *Æsthetic* exhilaration must not be confounded with devout communion. Nowhere is the pres-

ence and glory of God in earth, sea, and heavens so sublimely celebrated as in the Psalms ; and nowhere else are more fervid eulogies pronounced upon the sanctuary of God and the courts of the Lord's house. C. H. P.

Thy creatures have been my books, but Thy Scriptures much more. I have sought Thee in the forests, fields and gardens, but I have found Thee in Thy temples. *Bacon.*

PSALM LXXXV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

1 LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land :

Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,

Thou hast covered all their sin. [Selah

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath :

Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever ?

Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations ?

6 Wilt thou not quicken us again :

That thy people may rejoice in thee ?

7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,

And grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak :
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints ;

But let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him ;

That glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together ;

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth springeth out of the earth ;

And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

12 Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good ;
And our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him ;

And shall make his footsteps a way to walk in.

THERE seems every reason to conclude that this Psalm was written after the return of the exiles from the Babylonish captivity. It opens with an acknowledgment of God's goodness and mercy in the national restoration, in terms which could hardly apply to any other event. But it passes immediately to earnest entreaty for deliverance from the pressure of existing evils, in language which almost contradicts the previous acknowledgment. First we hear the grateful confession, "Thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob ;" and then we have the prayer, "Turn us, O God of our salvation." If the third verse contains the joyful announcement, "Thou hast withdrawn all Thy wrath," etc., the fifth pleads

as if no such assurance had been given : "Wilt Thou forever be angry with us ? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations ?" The most probable way of explaining this conflict of opposing feelings is by referring the Psalm to the circumstances mentioned by Nehemiah (1 : 3). The exiles on their return, he learned, were "in great affliction and reproach." And when he obtained leave to go to Jerusalem himself, it was only in the midst of perpetual opposition and discouragement that he was able to carry on his work of restoration. The bright prospect which was opening before them had been quickly dashed. They had returned, indeed, but it was to a desolate land and a forsaken

city, whose walls were cast down, and her gates burned with fire; while jealous and hostile tribes were ever on the watch to assail and vex them. Hence it is that the entreaty for mercy follows so hard upon the acknowledgment that mercy has been vouchsafed. The hundred and twenty-sixth Psalm is conceived in a somewhat similar strain. In the latter portion of this Psalm (from v. 8) the present misery is forgotten in the drawing of a glorious future. The prayer has been uttered; the storm of the soul is hushed; in quietness and resignation the Psalmist sets himself to hear what God will say, and the Divine answer is given, not in form, but in substance, in vs. 9-12. It is a glowing prophecy of Messianic times, most naturally connecting itself with the hopes which the return from Babylon had kindled afresh, and well fitted to enable those who heard it to triumph over the gloom and despondency of the present.

Mr. Plumptre, who holds that all the Korahite Psalms belong to the time of Hezekiah, thinks that this Psalm refers to the Assyrian invasion. He reminds us that the language of Isaiah in reference to that invasion is, that "the cities shall be wasted without inhabitant," that "the Lord shall remove men far away" (Isa. 6: 11, 12); that he speaks not only of "the remnant of Israel," "the remnant of Jacob" as returning (10: 29), but in terms hardly less strong, at the very crisis of Sennacherib's invasion, of "the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah" (37: 32). After the overthrow of Sennacherib, and when the alliance of Hezekiah was courted by Babylon, there would be ample opportunities for many of those who had been carried into exile to return to the land of their fathers. "The vision of mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, is the same with the Psalmist as with the prophet." It may be added, he remarks, that the prayer, "Turn us, O God of our salvation" (v. 4), is identical with the ever-recurring burden of Psalm 80, which clearly refers to the captivity of "Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh," *i.e.*, of "Jacob" rather than of "Judah." P.

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician. To (or by) the Sons of Korah. A Psalm.* On the ground of former benefits, the Church prays for deliverance from present evils (vs. 1-7), and joyfully anticipates a favorable answer (vs. 8-13). There is nothing in the title, or the Psalm itself, to determine its date or confine its application to any particular historical occasion. It seems to be appropriate to every case in which the fulfillment of the promise (Lev. 26: 3-13) was suspended or withheld. A.

1-4. The Psalmist dwells upon the Lord's favor to the chosen land, which he had shewed in a thousand ways. God's past doings are prophetic of what he will do; hence the encouraging argument: "Thou hast been favorable unto Thy land," therefore deal graciously with it again. Many a time had foes been baffled, pestilence stayed, famine averted, and deliverance vouchsafed, because of the Lord's favor; that same favorable regard is therefore again invoked. With an immutable God this is powerful reasoning. S.

6. *Wilt Thou not return (and) quicken us, (and) shall (not) Thy people rejoice in Thee?* "Wilt Thou not revisit us in mercy, raise us from the dead or dying state in which we now are, and give us, as Thy people, fresh occasion to rejoice in our relation to Thee, and in our union and communion with Thee?" A.

Rejoice in Thee. Not in any earthly blessings, even when they are vouchsafed; not in corn, or wine, or oil; not in the fatness of the earth or the dew of heaven; but in Him who giveth all these things; who giveth more than all these—Himself. P.—When God changeth the cheer of His people, their joy should not be in the gift, but in the Giver. *Dickson.*—It is the most natural thing for the people of God to rejoice in God. God is the fountain of joy, and whom should He fill with it but His people? And whom should His people breathe it into again but Him? This posture God delights to have them in; this posture they delight to be in. *John Pennington.*

7. Thy mercy. It is not merely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but all is mercy, from first to last; mercy that met us by the way; mercy that looked upon us in our misery; mercy that washed us from our sins in His own blood; mercy that covered our nakedness and clad us in His own robe of righteousness; mercy that led and guided us by the way, and mercy that will never leave nor forsake us till mercy has wrought its perfect work in the eternal salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ. *Bouchier.*

8. I will hear; or, "let me hear." Having uttered his sorrows and his prayer for better days, he would now place himself in the attitude of calm and quiet expectation. Like Habakkuk, he will betake him to his watch-tower, and wait to hear what the Lord will speak. P.

A good life and a well-governed conversation doth not fear the voice of God; the word of God is the light which God hath set up in His Church, to guide her feet in the ways of peace.

They that do evil hate the light ; the children of the light resort to it, and call upon God. *Marbury.*—The Christian knows that the Lord Christ is speaking to him, when he reads His Word, with as absolute a knowledge as when he hears father, mother, wife, or child speaking to him. Ruskin put the whole of it in a line when he said that “No syllable of the great Book was ever yet to be understood but by a deed.” The Bible will never be destroyed so long as there is a right act done, and act of righteousness, to make its meaning clear—never till the Lord Christ is dumb, and the Holy Spirit dead. No man will ever know that the Scriptures are the Word of God till he knows it by Christian experience, and so knowing it, all kind of controversy is no more to him than the snow-storm beating against the window-panes, as he kneels amid his family to thank God for its sweet promises, pure truths, the blessed Christ, and the glorious salvation which it has brought to him and to his children. *Interior.*

He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints. There are a people in the world who are God’s people, set apart for Him, subject to Him, and who shall be saved by Him. All His people are His saints, sanctified by His grace and devoted to His glory ; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings and within are fears ; but, sooner or later, God will speak peace to them ; if He do not command outward peace, yet He will suggest inward peace ; speaking that to their hearts by His Spirit which He has spoken to their ears by His Word and ministers, and making them to hear joy and gladness. H.

Peace ; that is God’s great word, which in fact sums up and comprises all else, peace with him declared to all who are His beloved, the objects of His loving-kindness (see on 16 : 10) having the privileges of their covenant relation to Him. P.—An upright heart will not be satisfied without hearing God speak peace by His Spirit. And for this he will pray and wait and hearken, and when God speaks peace, there comes such sweetness with it and such discovery of His love, as lays a powerful influence on the soul not to turn again to folly. This peace is an humbling, melting peace, which brings humiliation to the soul as well as joy ; but this never happens when men speak peace to themselves. *John Berridge.*

Only determine, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak,” and “He will speak peace.” God never disappoints a really attentive hearer. God has always something to say to us. We only miss it either because we do not believe

that He is going to speak, or because we are not quiet enough. This is frequently the reason of a sickness or a deep sorrow. God has something to say to us. He makes a calm, He settles the rush of life, that He may speak. Peace, the peace of Christ, is a delicate plant. Do not expose it. Do not trifle with it, but lay it up in your heart’s closest affections. Watch it. Deal tenderly with it. It is your life. The expression, “turn again to folly,” may mean one of three things. Either all sin is folly, or you may understand by it the particular sin of those who return to the vanities of the world, or you may take it to imply that a relapse into what is wrong has such a distorting influence on the mind, and so perverts the judgment and darkens the intellect, that both by natural consequence and judicial retribution the condition of a person who goes on in sin after the strivings of the Holy Ghost and after the manifestations of God’s peace becomes emphatically “folly.” J. V.

But let them not turn again to folly. The death of sin is mostly a gradual process, a thing going on for a long time, and not beginning or ending in one sharp, single struggle. Yet neither is it true that it goes on quite evenly. On the contrary, it has its sharper seasons and its gentler ones. It has times when it destroys much of the principle of sin within us ; it has times also when it does little more than hold its ground, and the struggle seems suspended. The process of the death of sin has in it nothing horrible, nothing exciting ; the imagination may not be struck by it ; and yet it is of an interest really far deeper than the death of the body, and an interest which we may all presently realize. It works quietly and invisibly to the eyes of others, but most perceptibly and most truly to him who is undergoing it. Many struggle successfully against one marked fault, but fly back from the prospect of having to overcome a whole sinful nature and having to become made anew after God’s image. So it is but too often, but so it is not always. Let us suppose that we bear the sight of our general sinfulness not with a cowardly despair, but with a Christian resolution ; then indeed begins the struggle which may be truly called the death of folly. *T. Arnold.*

9. Glory, i.e., the manifested presence of God tabernacled visibly among them, as of old. This hope was destined to have its fulfilment, but in a better and a higher sense, when He who was the brightness of the Father’s glory tabernacled in human flesh, and men “beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the

Father." P.—What land the true Church of Christ, the saints and they that fear God, do dwell in, *there doth glory dwell*; there God, there Christ by His Spirit bringing righteousness and salvation to such a society is glorious; and for His presence the people are glorious; and the land glorious above all other lands whatsoever. *Dickson.*

10-12. We must take the passage as poetry, genuine and beautiful poetry. These abstract qualities are personified; they take on the forms and the spirit, too, of life. The drift of thought here is of commerce between heaven and earth, transactions between the God above and His children below. God will speak peace to His people. His salvation is nigh to His hearers. Truth is thought of as *springing up* like other things that grow out of the earth; while righteousness looks down lovingly from heaven. The Lord gives the good; the land and man receive it. C.

10. *Mercy and truth have met (together); righteousness and peace have kissed (each other).* By *truth*, we are to understand the truth of God's promises, the Divine veracity. The same combination with grace or mercy occurs in Psalms 25:10; 40:10; 57:3; 61:7 and 89:14. *Righteousness*, considered as the gift of God, justification, whether judicial or providential. *Peace*, immunity from all disturbing causes, which implies prosperity of every kind. *Have met*, in a peaceable and friendly manner, an idea still more strongly expressed by the kiss of reconciliation or affection in the last clause. A.

Vs. 10-13 are a fourfold picture of how heaven and earth ought to blend and harmonize. In the tenth verse we have the heavenly twin sisters, and the earthly pair that corresponds. Mercy and truth, two radiant angels, like virgins in some solemn choric dance, linked hand in hand, issue from the sanctuary and move among the dim haunts of men, making "a sunshine in a shady place;" and to them there come forth, linked in a sweet embrace, another pair, whose lives depend on the lives of their elder and heavenly sisters, righteousness and peace. In man's experience righteousness and peace cannot be rent apart. Righteousness and her twin sister Peace only come in the measure in which the mercy and the truth of God are received into thankful hearts. A. M.

The four virtues here mentioned are, as Calvin remarks, the four cardinal virtues of Christ's kingdom. Where these reign among men, there must be true and perfect felicity. P.—*Mercy and truth* are apparently irreconcilable. Righteousness and peace seem to be

unattainable through sin. These meet and mutually embrace in the salvation of God. The work of the Redeemer and the work of the Sanctifier can alone explain this. Mercy is the moving cause; truth, the means of salvation. Righteousness magnifies the law, of which peace is the legal consequence. M.—*Mercy and peace* are on one side; *truth and righteousness* on the other. *Truth* requires *righteousness*; *mercy* calls for *peace*. They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned, are adjusted; and their mutual claims are blended together in one common interest; on which *peace* and *righteousness* immediately embrace. Thus, *righteousness* is given to *truth*, and *peace* is given to *mercy*. Now, *where* did these meet? In Christ Jesus. *When* were they reconciled? When He poured out His life on Calvary. A. Clarke.

These four Divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to serve man, and peace could not be his enemy; but truth exacted the performance of God's threat, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and righteousness could not but give to every one his due. Jehovah must be true in all His ways, and righteous in all His works. Now, there is no religion upon earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore a union between them; which can show how God's Word can be true, and His work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy and obtain peace. A God incarnate reconciled all things in heaven and earth. When Christ appeared in our nature, all the four parties met again, in perfect harmony: Truth ran to Mercy, and embraced her; Righteousness to Peace, and kissed her. *Bishop Horne.*—And not only was this the only way for the consistence of these two, justice and mercy, but take each of them severally, and they could not have been in so full lustre as in this. God's just hatred of sin did, out of doubt, appear more in punishing His own only-begotten Son for it, than if the whole race of mankind had suffered for it eternally. Again, it raises the notion of mercy to the highest, that sin is not only forgiven us, but for this end God's own co-eternal Son is given to us, and for us. Consider what He is, and what we are; He the *Son of His love*, and we enemies. Therefore it is emphatically expressed in the words, *He Himself bare our sins. God so loved the world*, that love amounts to this much,

that it was so great as *to give His Son*. But how great that is cannot be uttered. *In this*, says the apostle, *God commendeth His love to us*, sets it off to the highest, gives us the richest and strongest evidence of it. *Leighton*.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission;" and a soul taught of God is content that it should be so. Such a soul sees a grandeur in God's law, and a lustre in God's justice and truth, and much as it may covet pardon, thankful as it might be for a right to heaven, it would not wish to steal into heaven, nor receive a pardon which made God a liar. Ah no! let God be true though all mankind should perish; let the law be magnified, though the avenging bolt should fire the universe. And to such a soul it is relief unspeakable when it sees "mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other;" when it learns that for the remission of sin blood has been already shed, a blood which cleanseth from all sin, even the precious blood of God's own Son, as of a Lamb without blemish. *Hamilton*.

In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man, in the humiliation of His life, and in His death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion; while at the same moment the law of God received more honor than it could have done by the obedience and death of any or of all His creatures. *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*. In this dispensation of His grace He has reached so far beyond our highest hopes that, if we love Him, we may be assured that He will with it freely give us all things. Access to God is now opened at all times, and from all places; and to such as sincerely ask it, He has promised His Spirit to teach them to pray, and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it just for Him to forgive sin; and whenever we are led to repent of and to forsake it, even the *righteousness* of God is declared in the pardon of it. *R. Hall*.

The justice and truth of God are as clearly revealed as His goodness and mercy. They must not be thrown into opposition, but must forever co-exist. And if mercy be ever displayed, it will be in such a way as shall hold up justice and holiness with undiminished and equal splendor. This is, indeed, the key to the whole Gospel, which is none other than a device of infinite wisdom to repair the evils of the fall, and thus show forth all the commingling perfections of God in magnificent and adorable harmony. All hues blend with consummate beauty in the rainbow around the throne. To effect this harmony

was the intention of the most extraordinary transaction in the earth's history—namely, that He who made it died upon it. Love, boundless love, stayed the hand of justice, held the bolt of fiery retribution, and interposed itself between the descending edge and our condemned souls. If God were all justice, and He is as truly just as loving, no redemption had been possible. If God had been all love, and He is as truly loving as He is just, no redemption had been necessary. But because He is both justice and mercy, and because justice demanded satisfaction, and mercy pleaded for remission, "Righteousness and peace kissed each other;" and love hung on the arm of paternal severity, while wisdom pointed out a method to reconcile both. *J. W. A.*

11. *Truth from the earth is springing, and righteousness from heaven looks down.* The truth of God's promise may be seen, as it were, springing from the earth in its abundant fruits, and His rectitude, or faithfulness to His engagements, looking down from heaven in the rain and sunshine. By this bold and beautiful conception, the certainty of God's providential care is expressed more strongly than it could be by any mere didactic statement. The beauty of the image in the last clause is heightened by the use of a verb which originally means to lean or bend over, for the purpose of gazing down upon a lower object. *A.*—The meaning appears to be, the result of God's faithfulness to His covenant of grace will be abundance of the fruits of righteousness; in the outward sense, temporal prosperity; in the inner sense (which if not present to the Psalmist's mind is involved in the Divine promise), the spiritual gifts and graces which belong to the kingdom of God. *Cook*.

Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God, and abhor the falsehood which they loved before. "*And righteousness shall look down from heaven*," as if it gazed down upon a penitent people, whom it could not have looked upon before without an indignation which would have been fatal to them. This is a delicious scene. Earth yielding flowers of truth, and heaven shining with stars of holiness; the spheres echoing to each other, or being mirrors of each other's beauties. "Earth carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness" shall be a nether heaven. When God looks down in grace, man sends his heart upward in obedience. *S.*

In the eleventh verse, "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look

down from heaven," we have God responding to man's truth. Man's truth shall begin to grow and blossom in answer, as it were, to God's truth that came down upon it. Righteousness shall look down from heaven, not in its judicial aspect merely, but as the perfect moral purity that belongs to the Divine nature, which shall bend down a loving eye upon the men beneath and mark the springings of any imperfect good and thankfulness in our hearts.

12. The third aspect of the ideal relation between earth and heaven set forth in this verse: "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase;" that is

to say, man responding to God's gift. The great truth is here developed that earthly fruitfulness is possible only by the reception of heavenly gifts.

13. The last phase of the fourfold representation of the ideal relation between earth and heaven is, "Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps;" that is to say, God teaching man to walk in His footsteps. Man may walk in God's ways, not only in the ways that please Him, but in the ways that are like Him. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." A. M.

PSALM LXXXVI.

A PRAYER OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 Bow down thine ear, O LORD, and answer me;
For I am poor and needy.</p> <p>2 Preserve my soul: for I am godly:
O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.</p> <p>3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord;
For unto thee do I cry all the day long.</p> <p>4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant;
For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.</p> <p>5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,
And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.</p> <p>6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer;
And hearken unto the voice of my supplications.</p> <p>7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee;
For thou wilt answer me.</p> <p>8 There is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord;
Neither are there any works like unto thy works.</p> <p>9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord;
And they shall glorify thy name.</p> | <p>10 For thou art great, and doest wondrous things:
Thou art God alone.</p> <p>11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth:
Unite my heart to fear thy name.</p> <p>12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart;
And I will glorify thy name for evermore.</p> <p>13 For great is thy mercy toward me;
And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest pit (unseen world beneath).</p> <p>14 O God, the proud are risen up against me,
And the congregation of violent men have sought after my soul,
And have not set thee before them.</p> <p>15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth.</p> <p>16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thine handmaid.</p> <p>17 Shew me a token for good;
That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed,
Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.</p> |
|---|---|

THIS Psalm, which is inserted among a series of Korahite Psalms, is the only one in the third book ascribed to David. That it was written by him we can hardly suppose. Many of the ex-

pressions are, no doubt, such as we meet with in his Psalms, but there are also many which are borrowed from other passages of Scripture. Indeed, the numerous adaptations of phrases employed by other writers may reasonably be taken as evidence of a much later date. Further, the style is, as Delitzsch remarks, liturgical rather than poetical, and is wholly wanting in that force, animation, and originality for which David's poems are remarkable. The Psalm is stamped by the use of the Divine name, Adonai, which occurs in it seven times. P.—It can only be entitled "of David" as having grown out of Davidic and other classical passages. The author can measure himself in respect of poetic endowment neither with David nor with the authors of such Psalms as 116 and 130. D.

This Psalm is not usually numbered, but it might well be, among the penitential Psalms. Its pensiveness is that of contrition. From the Divine attributes which it accentuates, and from its expressions, as well as from the tone that runs through it, we see a tender conscience, healed and lowly, sensible of fault, rejoicing in forgiveness. The Psalmist dwells on God's mercy, on His long-suffering, on His readiness to forgive, as only they dwell who have the broken and contrite heart. Observe that wherever you find contrition you find a light peculiarly its own, an unusual brightness, a lofty hope, a vision of God amazing in its clearness, and a vision of man remarkable for its brightness and its faith. We cannot by searching find out God, but we can by trusting. *R. Glover.*

1-4. The petitioner is first described as *poor*, then *godly*; next *trusting*, after that *crying*, finally, *lifted up to God*. And each epithet has its fitting verb; *bow down* to the poor, *preserve* the godly, *save* the trusting, *be merciful* to him who cries, *rejoice* the lifted-up. It is the whole gamut of love from the Incarnation to the Ascension; it tells us that Christ's humiliation will be our glory and joy. *Anon.*

1. When we use the name of Jehovah in our prayers, we contemplate and trust in and plead with Him all the grand thoughts of eternal subsistence, inexhaustible power, unwearied strength, resources that never fail, purposes that never alter, a being that never fails, a nature lifted high above the mutations of time, who dwells in a region above all tenses and moods, and *is* and *was*, and *is to come* in one ineffable and mysterious present. Nor only so, but we likewise say, "and this Rock of ages, and basis of all that is, hath spoken and entered into the bonds of love and covenant with men, whereby they can plead with Him His revealed character,

and appeal to Him on the ground of His ancient promise." A. M.

When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them. Faith, when she has the loftiest name of God on her tongue, and calls Him Jehovah, yet dares to ask from Him the most tender and condescending acts of love. Great as He is, He loves His children to be bold with Him. S.

2. The first plea was his need; now he pleads his own covenant relation to God; for this is implied in the adjective here used, *châsîd*. The appeal is not to anything in himself, but to God's goodness. This is clear from v. 5. At the same time he does not hesitate to say what the attitude of his heart is toward God, and to urge his simple, absolute confidence in God, as well as his unceasing, earnest prayer, as reasons why he should be heard. This is the language of honest, straightforward simplicity, not of self-righteousness. P.

There is a consciousness of personal sanctification through faith (v. 2) associated with an acutely sensitive perception of intrinsic worthlessness, such as only finds relief in the remembrance of unaltered grace (v. 5), which, to the exercised spirit of one really growing in the knowledge of God, will address itself with an especial acceptance. *Arthur Pridham.*

2. Godly. The original simply means "one who is a recipient or object of mercy." It is passive, not active, in signification. The meaning is as our Bible has it in the margin, "One whom Thou favorest." The plea then here is drawn, not from the righteousness of the man, but from the mercy of God. It sets forth the relation between God and His suppliant from the Divine side, and pleads God's gracious bestowal of mercy upon him in the past as a reason for its continuance and perfecting. "Thou hast been pleased to love and favor me, to enrich me with Thy grace. Be what Thou hast been; do what Thou hast done; forsake not the work of Thine own hands." And God, who begins no buildings which He is not able to finish, recognizes the strength of the plea, and will perfect that which concerneth us. There follows the same relation contemplated from the human side, and that, too, is a plea with God. "Thy servant that trusteth in Thee." I am knit to Thee, as a servant I belong to Thy household, and the Master's honor is concerned in His dependent's safety. I belong to Thee; do Thou watch over what is Thine own. I trust

in Thee. We do not plead our faith as constituting a claim of merit with God, but as constituting a plea with Him. It is not that it deserves deliverance—else we might well hesitate to urge it, when we think of its weakness and often interruptions—but that it is sure to bring deliverance. For anything is possible rather than that the most tremulous trust should go unblest and unanswered. A. M.

3. He pleads: first that he was poor and needy; next that he was the Lord's set-apart one; then that he was God's servant and had learned to trust in the Lord, and lastly that he had been taught to pray daily; surely these are such holy pleadings as any tried believer may employ when wrestling with a prayer-hearing God, and with such weapons the most trembling suppliant may hope to win the day. S.

God will suit His returns to our requests. Lifeless services shall have lifeless answers. When men are dull, God will be dumb. *T. Brooks.*—He walks in the presence of God that converses with Him in frequent prayer and communion; that runs to Him with all his necessities; that asks counsel of Him in all his doubtings; that opens all his wants to Him; that weeps before Him for all his sins; and that asks remedy and support for his weakness; that fears Him as a Judge, reverences Him as a Lord, and obeys Him as a Father. *Jeremy Taylor.*

4. *Gladden the soul of Thy servant, for unto Thee, O Lord, my soul do I raise.* It means "make me heartily rejoice, because I am Thy servant," thus suggesting a new ground of his petition, different in form although substantially identical with that in the preceding verse. A. —Love bears one's soul up; and it has been truly said that the soul is more where it loves than where it actually is. Thought and desire are the wings of love; for he that loves is borne on to and abides in what he loves by thinking constantly on and longing for the object of his love. Whoever truly and from his heart loves God, by thinking on Him and longing for Him, lifts up his soul to God; while whoever loves the earth, by thinking on and coveting the things of the earth, lets his soul down to its level. *Bellarmino.*

It is worth notice that in all this variety of petitions for deliverance there is not a word about the exact manner of it. The way in which God's mercy is to guard and save is left, with meek patience, to God's decision. Let us not prescribe to Him the path which He shall take, but commit that to His own loving wisdom. There are two methods of light-

ening a burden: one is to diminish the load, the other is to strengthen the shoulders that carry it. The latter is often the more blessed, and often the shape in which God answers our prayer. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." Then, in the final petition (v. 4), the Psalm rises still higher, and not satisfied with imploring that God would hear, guard, and save, asks for gladness, too, "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant." We may venture to ask and expect gladness if we are God's servants. All His creatures have a claim on Him for blessedness according to their capacity, so long as they stand where He has set them, and we, who have departed from that obedience which is joy, may yet, in penitent abasement, return to Him and ask that He would rejoice the soul of His servant. David's deepest repentance dared to ask, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." No sorrow is so crushing and hopeless, but that happiness may again visit the heart, where trust and love abide. Only let us remember that this Psalm seeks for joy, where it seeks for help, not from earthly sources, but from God. Cisterns may be broken, but the fountain cannot be choked up with their ruins. They who find their deliverance in God are often tempted to find their pleasure somewhere else. It is often easier to pray with tears, "Preserve me and save me," than with undistracted love to choose Him as our only delight. But the true, devout heart turns equally to God for all it needs, and its prayer ever is, "O deliver me; then will I go unto the altar of God, to God, the gladness of my joy." A. M.

5-7. It is on the broad ground of God's mercy, as freely bestowed on *all* who seek it, that he rests. He applies the general truth (v. 5) to his own case (v. 6). In v. 7 he pleads again the need, under the pressure of which he cries to God; it is no unmanly, petulant, peevish complaint that he utters. The calamity is real, and there is but one who has power to deliver him. P.

5. *For Thou, Lord, art good and forgiving and rich in mercy to all (those) invoking Thee.* God is not only the Sovereign of His people, and as such bound by covenant to protect them, but benevolent or good in His own nature: and that not merely in the general, or in reference to all His creatures, but especially in reference to the undeserving and the ill-deserving; that is, to such of them as really desire His favor, and evince their willingness to have it by the act of

asking for it. *Rich (in) mercy*, literally, *great* (or much, abundant, plenteous, as to) *mercy*. A.

Ready to forgive. The mercy of God is a ready mercy, and His pardons are ready for His people; His pardons and mercies are not to seek, He hath them at hand, He is "*good and ready to forgive*." Whereas most men, though they will forgive, yet they are not *ready* to forgive, they are hardly brought to it, though they do it at last. But God is "*ready to forgive*." Thus the Scripture speaks to show how forward God is to do good; He needs not set His heart to it; His heart is ever in the exactest fitness. *Caryl*.—As there is no mercy too great for God to give, so there is no mercy too little for us to crave. Certainly that man hath little worth to him, who thinks any mercy not worth a seeking. *T. Brooks*.

Because our necessities and our desires derive their force as pleas from *God's own character*, he urges that as his last and mightiest appeal. He began with invocation, and he ends as he began. The name of God is the ground of all our hope, and the motive for all His mercy. Turn away, then, from all thoughts of self, of your own needs, of your own trust, and prayer, and aspiration. The one prevalent plea with God is the faithful recounting of all that grace and pity which He is and has exercised. "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee." Our need is the occasion; our faith and desire the channel; but Himself is the reason, as Himself is the source, of all our deliverance and all our salvation. Because we can pray by none other, we implore Him by Himself, for the sake of His own Holy Name, because He is that He is, to have mercy upon us who cry to Him. And when *we* call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and ask that *our* prayers may be heard "for the sake of Christ," we are taking no other plea into our lips than that ancient and all prevalent one of this Psalm. It is His own mercy in Christ which we present. It is the work of His own love which we bring as our plea. A. M.

6, 7. We need never shrink from prayer because it is our time of trouble, so be it we have honestly served God in our better days. With all His heart the Lord invites His faithful ones to come to Him in every trouble, and justifies the assurance expressed here: "for Thou wilt answer me." C.

8-10. There are two kinds of doubt which are wont in the hour of temptation to assail the soul: the doubt as to God's *willingness*, and the doubt as to God's *power* to succor. The first of

these the Psalmist has already put from Him; he now shows that he has overcome the second. God is able as well as willing to help, and every being on the face of the earth who receives help receives it from the hand of Him who is the only God, and who shall one day be recognized (so speaks the strong prophetic hope within him, v. 9) as the only God. This hope rests on the fact that God has created all men ("all nations whom *Thou hast made*"), and nothing can be imagined more self-contradictory than that the spirit which has come from God should remain forever unmindful of its source. In v. 8 it might seem as if God were merely compared with the gods of the nations. In v. 10 they are plainly said to be "no gods," though they "be called gods." There is but one God: "Thou art God alone." P.

9. *All nations which Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and give honor to Thy name.* The common relation of Jehovah to all men as their Maker, although now denied by most nations, shall be one day universally acknowledged, not in word merely, but in act, the most expressive act of worship, involving a believing recognition of the previous display of God's perfections, in the language of the Scriptures called *His Name*. This prospective view of the conversion of the world to the belief and service of its Maker shows how far the Old Testament writers were from cherishing or countenancing the contracted nationality of the later and the less enlightened Jews. A.

9, 10. From the infinite superiority of the true God above all idols, the Psalmist comes to the grand result that the truth of the case will ultimately triumph; all the heathen nations will one day cast away their empty gods and give their heart's entire love and homage to the Lord Jehovah. He loves to enlarge upon the reason why, "For Thou art great; thou doest wondrous things; thou only art really *God*." This is a perfect reason. There is infinite fitness that the supreme and only God should at length place Himself at the head of this world, its acknowledged Lord and King, its one only object of supreme love and obedience. So let it be! And let the time thereof hasten on! C.

11. *Guide me, Jehovah, (in) Thy way; I will walk in Thy truth; unite my heart to fear Thy name.* The common version of the first verb (*teach me*) is too vague, as it fails to bring out the peculiar suitability of the term to express the kind of teaching here specifically meant. The original meaning of the Hebrew word is to point out or mark the way. According to the usage of the Psalms, the *way* of God is here the

course of His providential dealings, and His *truth* the truth of His promises, to *walk* in which is to assent to them or acquiesce in them and trust them. That he may be enabled to do this without distraction or reserve is the prayer of the last clause. The idea of a united heart is the opposite of a double heart. A.—Every word here is beautiful and strong. “Point out to me Thy way ;” as with the extended finger, indicate the path for me to tread. I will walk *earnestly*—the intensive form of the Hebrew verb—in Thy truth ; *i.e.*, according to all which Thy revealed truth shall prescribe. “Unite my heart ;” combine all its utmost powers ; help me to concentrate every thought and affection upon filial, reverential obedience. Let not my heart be *divided*, given partly to other objects than Thyself. C.

Walk in Thy truth. Although in a great strait, and in fear of his enemies, the Psalmist, like all who pray aright, offers first the petition, “Hallowed be Thy name,” before he asks, “Give us this day our daily bread,” and “deliver us from evil.” He confesses that his spiritual eye is not yet perfectly enlightened, his heart not yet perfect with God. And while he rejects every other way, every other rule of life, but the eternal rule of God’s truth, he prays first that he may more clearly discern that way, and then that all the various desires, interests, passions, that agitate the human heart, may have no hold upon him, compared with the one thing needful, “to fear God’s name.” P.

Everything that makes the soul feel, or affects her nature, is but truth or error, in some of their numberless forms. Goodness, love, beauty, and all other right things, which the soul feels so keenly, what are they but the *truth* of character, actions, and objects to the eternal fitness of things in God ? And wickedness, injustice, deformity, and all other wrong things, to which the soul is so sensitive, what are *they* but the *falsehood* of character, actions, and objects to that same eternal fitness ? Without truth in matters of religion, the soul cannot understand what God is, what sin is, what holiness is, what duty is, what the way of salvation is, what heaven is, or what is the meaning of *anything* religious. And, until it *understand* what these and kindred things are, ay, and feel them too, it cannot repent, cannot believe, cannot exercise Divine love, cannot perform a single holy act, cannot become a renewed and purified being. God has given us His revealed and written truth ; this truth He has put into the hands of His Spirit ; and with this His Spirit works in renewing and purifying the soul. Under our

economy of means, this is a *necessary* instrument in His work. With this *only*, as resident in His Church, and as making use of an instrument, He enlightens, quickens, changes, purifies, strengthens, comforts, and perfects the soul into a likeness to His own blessed self. J. S. Stone.

Unite my heart, suffer it no longer to scatter itself upon a multiplicity of objects, to be drawn hither and thither by a thousand different aims, but turn all its powers, all its affections in one direction, collect them in one focus, make them all one in Thee. The prayer derives a special force from the resolve immediately preceding : “I will walk in Thy truth.” The same integrity of heart which made the resolve could alone utter the prayer. The nearest Old Testament parallels are : the “one heart” (Jer. 32 : 39) ; “And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever ;” and the “whole heart” of love to God (Deut. 6 : 5). Our Lord teaches us how needful the prayer of this verse is. Compare what He says of “the single eye,” the impossibility of serving two masters, the folly and the wearisomeness of those anxious cares by which men suffer themselves to be hampered and distracted, and, in contrast with all this, the exhortation, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” P.

Having taught me one way, give me one heart to walk therein, for too often I feel a heart and a heart, two natures contending, two principles struggling for sovereignty. A man of divided heart is weak, the man of one object is *the* man. God, who created the bands of our nature, can draw them together, tighten, strengthen, and fasten them, and so braced and inwardly knit by His uniting grace, we shall be powerful for good, but not otherwise. To fear God is both the beginning, the growth, and the maturity of wisdom, therefore should we be undividedly given up to it, heart and soul. S.—Sincerity drives but one design, and that is to please and enjoy God ; and what can more establish and fix the soul in the hour of temptation than this ? The reason why the hypocrite is unstable in all his ways is given us by the apostle ; he is “a double-minded man,” a man of two souls in one body. But all the designs of a gracious heart are united in one ; and so the entire stream of his affections runs strong. Flavel.

Every man feels instinctively that all the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action ; and that while tenderness of feeling and susceptibility of generous emotions are accidents of life, permanent goodness is an achievement and a quality of the life. The only conclusive evidence of a man’s sincer-

ity is that he gives himself for a principle. Words, money, all things else, are comparatively easy to give away, but when a man makes a gift of his daily life and practice it is plain that the truth, whatever it may be, has taken possession of him. From that sincerity his words gain the force and pertinency of deeds, and his money is no longer the pale drudge 'twixt man and man, but, by a beautiful magic, what erewhile bore the image and superscription of Cæsar seems now to bear the image and superscription of God. *J. Russell Lovell.*

"Unite my heart to fear Thy name." If we would be consistent men, God must be first in everything. If this is so, the first consequence will be that our motives will be consistent. The fear of God will abide as a purifying influence in the very centre of our springs of action, His eye ever looking on us, His benefits ever constraining us. Union of the heart in God's fear will save us from grievous or fatal inconsistency in opinion. He whose heart is united to fear his God, though not exempt from other men's failings, is saved from other men's recklessness, and has a tenderer and a safer conscience in the matter of forming and holding opinion. *Alford.*

Whole verse. In the expressions "teach," "fear," "walk," we have religion presented to us in the three aspects of knowledge, feeling, and conduct; in other words, religion in the head, in the heart, and in the feet. Religion affects the whole circle of man's activity. As *knowledge*, it illumines his intellect or guides his thinking in relation to those matters of which religion takes cognizance; as *feeling*, it awakens right promptings within him in relation to those matters; as *conduct*, it furnishes rules for his doing. First, religion as a matter of knowledge, a process of instruction. "Teach me Thy way, O Lord." The Teacher, "the Lord." Religious illumination comes from God, the Father of lights. He graciously assumes the character of Teacher to men in the way of salvation. To this end He has provided for them a great lesson-book, none other than the Bible. When we read this book, we sit in effect, like Mary of old, at the feet of the Divine Teacher to learn "His way." The learner, man. Man displays the first essential of a true learner, a keen desire for his lesson. The scholar casts himself at the feet of his Divine Teacher, and entreats to be taught. Meekness and fear—that is, docility and reverence, are qualities in the pupil which unlock the secrets of the Divine heart. Secondly, religion in the heart, or religion as a matter of feeling. Religion here has made its way from

the head into the heart; from the light of knowledge it has become the warmth of emotion. The particular emotion into which the knowledge develops is fear. This is not fear in the sense of terror or dismay, but love. It is heart-fear, not conscience-fear. It is the child-disposition, sweet, trustful, and penetrated with holy, subduing reverence. The condition of its development. The essential condition of this beautiful disposition is a heart at peace with all its passions, in thorough harmony with God. Thirdly, religion in the life, or as a matter of conduct. Divine truth is first light in relation to men; this truth or light received into the hearts of men becomes converted into love; and this love becomes a mighty propelling force, impelling them irresistibly along the line of truth and righteousness. *A. J. Parry.*

12. This verse describes the effect that is to follow from the granting of the prayer at the close of the preceding verse. When his heart is once united to fear God, cordial and perpetual thanksgiving will follow as a necessary consequence. *A.*

I will praise Thee. Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels. Believers are called "temples of God." When our tongues praise, then the organs of God's spiritual temple are sounding. How sad it is that God hath no more glory from us in this way! Many are full of murmuring and discontent, but seldom bring glory to God, by giving Him the praise due to His name. Praise is the quit-rent we pay to God; while God renews our lease, we must renew our rent. *T. Watson.*—**O Lord my God.** This is the second time in the Psalm that David calls the Lord "my God;" the first time he was in an agony of prayer (v. 2), and now he is in an ecstasy of praise. If anything can make a man pray and praise, it is the knowledge that the Lord is his God. "*And I will glorify Thy name forevermore*;" into eternity gratitude will prolong its praise. God has never done blessing us, let us never have done blessing Him. As He ever gives us grace, let us ever render to Him the glory of it. *S.*

13. *From the lower Sheol*, from going down to the under world. Hebrew usage compels us to interpret this of natural death, from which the Psalmist had been delivered. See Psalms 6:5; 88:10-12; 18:5, and Deut. 32:22, where these very words occur. *C.*

15. "*Thou, O Lord, Adonai, art a God; El, the strong God, full of compassion*;" the same words as Moses useth. Instead of *Jehovah*,

Adonai is used, "O Lord;" but then *El*, strong God, is the same word. The meaning is, let all the strength and power Thou the strong God hast in Thee be for my advantage. Now, is it not a bold request to say, Lord, wilt Thou give me all Thy strength to help me? A very bold request indeed; but His mercy

moves Him to grant it. Thus, then, petition Him: Thou art a God merciful and gracious, give Thy strength to me! Thou, O God, givest all Thy attributes up to Thy children, to serve their advantage, as well as to serve Thy own glory; give me Thy strength! *T. Goodwin.*

PSALM LXXXVII.

A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH; A SONG.

- 1 His foundation is in the holy mountains.
- 2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee,
O city of God. [Selah]
- 4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon
as among them that know me:
Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
This one was born there.

- 5 Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and
that one was born in her;
And the Most High himself shall establish
her.
- 6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up
the peoples,
This one was born there. [Selah]
- 7 They that sing as well as they that dance
shall say.
All my fountains are in thee.

Zion the Birthplace of Nations.

THE Messianic character of this beautiful Psalm, which declares the nature and glory of the Church, and the increase, honor, and comfort of the members thereof, is recognized by all modern commentators. It bears a close resemblance to the prophecies of Isaiah, which describe the future conversion of the bitterest enemies of Zion. *Cook.*—We have here a glorious exhibition of the kingdom of the Messiah, as covering the whole earth, but having its beginning and permanent centre at Jerusalem. The keynote is v. 9 of the preceding Psalm:

"All the nations Thou madest shall come,
And shall worship before Thee, O Lord;"

which is itself an echo of chap. 22 : 27 in the earlier worship of Israel:

"All the bounds of the earth
Shall remember and turn to Jehovah;
All the families of nations
Shall worship before Him."

Several representative nations are mentioned, not as subjugated enemies, but as highly honored members of the household of God, in fel-

lowship with Israel, and entitled to look with joyful pride to Zion as their birthplace and spiritual home. This is connected with a Divine declaration in vs. 3, 4 that they shall enjoy this great distinction. Its central thought is presented so boldly and concisely that it might be obscure were it not illuminated by other prophecies, especially Isa. 2 : 2-4; 11 : 10-18; 19 : 18-25, and 45 : 14. The regenerative grace which shall bring all nationalities of the earth into the most intimate and exalting relation with God is ever represented as issuing from Zion, the city of the Great King. *De Witt.*

The Jewish Church was not a missionary Church. So far as the Jews looked upon the world around them, it was with feelings of antipathy, and with the hope, which was never quenched in the midst of the most terrible reverses, that finally they, as the chosen race, should subdue their enemies far and wide, and that, by the grace of Heaven, one sitting on David's throne should be king of the world. Psalmists and prophets shared the feeling. They exulted in the thought that the king who ruled Zion would dash the nations in pieces like a potter's vessel, fill the places with dead bodies,

and lead rival kings in the long array of His triumph. But mingling with these anticipations, and correcting them, there were others of a nobler kind. The prophets speak not only of victories, but of voluntary submission. The vision which arises before them is not only of a forced unity of nations, such as that which was achieved by the iron hand of Roman dominion, but of a unity of faith and love. They see the mountain of the Lord's house exalted above the hills, and all nations flowing to it with one impulse, not led thither in the conqueror's train, but attracted by its glory, longing to taste its peace (Isa. 2 : 2-4). They see Gentiles coming to the light of Jerusalem, and kings to the brightness of her rising. They foretell a time when all wars and all national antipathies shall cease, when "the root of Jesse" shall be as a standard round which all nations shall flock, and the temple of Jehovah the centre of a common faith and worship. It is this last hope which expresses itself in this Psalm, but which expresses itself in a form that has no exact parallel in other passages. Foreign nations are here described, not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse, no shout of joy is raised in the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay more, God Himself receives each one as a child newly born into His family, acknowledges each as His son, and enrolls him with His own hand in the sacred register of His children.

It is this mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birthright so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language toward foreign States, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria. But the Psalm stands alone among the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth unto the city of God. It is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamed, which was "in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world," which had become a commonplace of stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to

realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community ; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into His commonwealth all the kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope ; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the Psalm has received a better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It was fulfilled in Christ. Its tone, as has already been observed, falls in with that of some of the prophecies of Isaiah. Hence it has been referred, not without reason, to the reign of Hezekiah. P.—This Psalm must be dated in the times of Hezekiah for the following reasons : The five Gentile nations named here were prominent in that age, while in the age of David, Egypt was not known under the name Rahab, and Babylon was scarcely if at all known on the map of the nations. (See Isa. 30 : 7 ; 51 : 9.) The name appears also in Psalm 89 : 10, but this belongs to the age of Hezekiah. The prophetic sentiment of this Psalm—viz., the conversion of all the great nations of the earth to the true God, is remarkably in harmony with the prophecies of Isaiah, which were suggested by the same event—the fall of the Assyrian hosts and God's glorious triumphs therein. (See Isa. 10-12 ; 17 : 12-14, with chaps. 18 : 7 ; 19 : 23-25.) This coincidence is very remarkable, showing that this great thought was not in the mind of Isaiah alone, but belonged to that age ; that the good men of Hezekiah's time saw in that wonderful overthrow of Assyria a sure presage of the fall of every opposing power and of the conversion of the great nations of the earth to the living God. C.

The outline of the Psalm is as follows : It opens with an outburst of intensely national feeling, celebrating the glory of Zion as the city of God (vs. 1-3). But the patriotic sentiment is too large and too grand to suffer any narrow jealousy to interfere with it, and therefore all nations are said to be gathered to her as children to one mother. It lends more force and dignity to this idea, that God Himself appears as the speaker, declaring of one and another, foreign and hostile nations, that their true birthplace is

there, in Zion. Finally, one brief, obscure verse tells of the joy and happiness of the holy city, welcoming new children on all sides, and making them partakers in her joy (v. 7). P.

1-3. The group of hills upon which Jerusalem was built is described as holy or sacred, because there was the temple, the seat of Jehovah's glory; and since Zion was the hill first occupied by David, and the most conspicuous quarter of the city, this stands for the whole. The glory of this sacred capital is here celebrated in the prospect of its universal supremacy. It is not of the physical Jerusalem, its streets, walls, gates, palaces, that these glorious things are spoken, but of Jerusalem as representing the presence, the Word, the Spirit, of the true God. J. P. T.

1. "His foundation," the place of His abode, where the strong pillars of His earthly temple are laid, is in the holy mountains; *i.e.*, of Jerusalem, made sacred ages before by God's choice of them as the site of His house. C.—The Church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter; Christ Himself is the Foundation of it, which God has laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains; it is built high, *the mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains* (Isa. 2 : 2). It is built firm; the mountains are rocky, and on a rock the church is built. The world is founded upon the seas (Psalm 24 : 2), which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten; but the Church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the Church is built (Isa. 54 : 10). The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the Church, that is it which will support it, and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon *holy* mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which He has sworn by His holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints. H.

The foundation that God has given His city is in "the holy mountains." What are these holy mountains whereon the city of God is built, and in which its deep and sure foundations are laid? The sure decree, the Divine perfections, the promise of Him that cannot lie, the oath and covenant of God, and the incarnate Son Himself, are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills, whose summits are gloriously crowned by the

city of the Great King. There the city sits securely, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. *Andrew Gray.*

2. *The Lord loveth the gates.* The gates of a walled city give access to it and power over it, and are therefore naturally here put for the whole. The Hebrew participle (*loving*) implies constant and habitual attachment. A.

3. "Glorious things were spoken of Zion." The spirit of exultant prophecy pervaded the inspired writers of that time. Well might the sons of Korah write "Selah" after the expression of a thought so suggestive. Let every reader pause and think of it! In our times we may profitably read over and dwell long upon these "glorious things" as we find them in Isa. 2, 9, 11, 12, and 35; not to name also his later prophecies, chaps. 42, 49, 54, 55, 60, and 66; also Micah 4, 5. C.

4. The words are the words of God. We have the same abrupt introduction of the Divine speaker in other Psalms. P.—The glorious purport of the promise is now unfolded in a most vivid and direct manner; Jehovah Himself begins to speak and sets forth the glorious calling of His chosen and beloved city as the minister of salvation to the whole world. It is to become the birthplace of all peoples. D.—This declaration is one of the strongest found in the prophetic writings. It does not speak of the subjugation, much less of the overthrow, of the enemies of Zion, but of their free admission to every blessing upon their conversion. *Cook.*

The nations thus announced as belonging to God's people are mere samples of the whole Gentile world, those being chosen for the purpose who were or had been most connected with the history of Israel, and were at the same time ruling powers of antiquity. *Rahab* is an enigmatical name given to Egypt by the Prophet Isaiah. The last words are obscure, but may be rendered clearer by supplying before them, *as to each of these it shall be said.* The pronoun (*this*) is then to be referred not to individual men, but to the nations as ideal persons. The idea of regeneration or spiritual birth, applied in the New Testament to individuals, is here applied to nations, who are represented as born again, when received into communion with the Church or chosen people. A.

"*Rahab*," "*Babylon*," "*Philistia*," "*Tyre*," "*Ethiopia*." This is the glory of the Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter: the proud from Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called Rahab; the worldly from Babylon, the city of confusion; the wrathful from Philistia, so long the enemies of Israel;

the covetous from Tyre, the rich city of the traders, and the slaves of ignorance from Cush, and from the land of Ham—all these shall learn the love of Christ and confess His truth, and shall enter into that all-glorious city, and be admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial Zion. *Plain Commentary.*

Born there. It is remarkable that the figure of a new birth is used to express the admission of the different nations to the rights of citizenship in Zion. So Cicero speaks of his restoration to his privileges and honors on his return from banishment as "a regeneration." P.

5. And of Zion ; or, and to Zion. The Psalmist represents the Almighty as presenting every convert to the holy city, and saying, "This and this, one and all, belong to thee, every one is thy own child." Such, in fact, is the exact language of God to the Church, the true Zion, in which alone promises and predictions have an adequate and perfect fulfilment. *Cook.*

Zion should be the spiritual birthplace of all nations. It is not merely said, as in other places, that they should "come to her," should "flow into her," but that they should be "born in her." "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (*i.e.*, all, one by one), was born in her;" Egyptians, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Tyrians, Philistines, should be "born in her," and by being "born there," should become children of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. The Lord shall account them as His, being re-born in His Church. *Pusey.*—The thought is precisely that of all the Old Testament prophets. "The nations shall flow unto it," the mountain of the Lord's house (Isa. 2 : 2). "Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord" (Zech. 8 : 22). So throughout those ancient prophecies, the Gentile nations come up in vast masses, flying as doves to their window-cotes, to learn of God and to give Him the homage of their hearts, *in Zion*. Here again "Selah" is altogether in place. Let all readers contemplate these marvellous things said of the future Zion of the Lord Jehovah. C.

6. Jehovah shall count, in enrolling the nations : This (one) was born there. Selah. The theme or idea of the whole Psalm, that Zion should yet be the birthplace of all nations, is again repeated, under a new figure, that of registration. The meaning is that, as He counts the nations, He shall say of each, in turn or one by one, this one was also born there. *In enrolling*, literally, *writing*, *i.e.*, inscribing in a list or register. A.

When he takes a census of the nations (compare the figure of Ezek. 13 : 9), the most glorious thing that he can say of each of them, the crown of all their history, shall be this, not the record of their separate national existence or polity or dominion, but the fact that they have become members by adoption of the city of God. Zion shall be the metropolis of the world.

This one is born there. The words are repeated, as by God Himself, as he enters one after another in the register of his city. P.

7. And singers as well as players (shall be heard saying), *All my springs are in Thee*. The image present to the Psalmist's mind seems to be that of a procession or triumphal march, composed of the nations on their way to Zion. At the head of this procession are the minstrels, who, as the spokesmen of the rest, acknowledge that the source of their happiness is henceforth to be sought in Zion, not as a mere locality, but as the place where God was pleased to manifest His gracious presence. It matters little, therefore, whether the closing words (*in Thee*) be referred to God directly, or to Zion, as the channel through which He imparted spiritual blessings to the Gentiles. A.

The singers and dancers are the leaders in a procession of redeemed Gentiles, representing the peoples mentioned in v. 4. These in their turn represent the whole world, as brought into fellowship with the living and true God, through the gracious influences that proceed from His dwelling place in Zion. *De Witt.*

This verse seems to express the joy of the converted Gentiles, who are represented as coming in a procession with singing and choral dancing unto Zion, and there one and all exclaiming, "All my fresh springs ; *i.e.*, all sources of life and joy, are in thee." *Cook.*—Great shall be the joy, great the pomp of festival and music when Zion welcomes her new inhabitants. This is doubtless the sense ; but the compressed brevity of this verse makes it extremely obscure. The preferable rendering is : "Both they that sing and they that dance, All my fountains of (delight) are in Thee ;" meaning that every source of pleasure, music, singing, etc., was to be found in Zion. P.

Song and dance went together among the ancient Hebrews as expressions of religious joy, and here we have the singers and dancers with but one thought in the mind of each. And what more appropriate close could there be to this stirring lyric ? If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, how unspeakable must be the joy over whole nations crowding to the temple gates and counting it their highest

privilege to be registered as newborn children of the Zion of God. Then, indeed, may the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands (Isa. 55 : 12). *Chambers.*

All my fountains are in Thee. There could be no more beautiful refrain than this. It refers especially to the spiritual life, the fountain of which is the Spirit of God. But it comprehends also the propitiation and the forgiveness of sin, both of which must also come from God. It may be even extended to the creation and providence as well as to the grace of God. This is the true and beautiful confession of the repentant, ransomed, and adopted children of God. *M.*—How truly does all our experience lead us to look to the Lord by faith, and say, "All my fresh springs are in Thee"! The springs of my faith and all my graces; the springs of my life and all my pleasures; the springs of my activity and all its right doings; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations—all lie in Thee, my Lord. *S.*

God is such a good that not only all can choose Him and find Him as adequate to each as if no other had thus chosen Him, but that each new choice of Him, both as augmenting His glory and increasing the good of others, augments the joy of those who have already thus chosen. And not only must we *receive* all things from Him, but it is only as we *give back* to Him our active love, as we love Him for His own sake as infinite in being and in excellence, that the highest joys of holiness can come. Those joys are indeed from the very activity that constitutes the holiness. Whether we regard ourselves then as passive or active, God is our good. "All our springs are in Him." *M. Hopkins.*

The images under which the Church is described in the Psalms are principally three. It is a city, Zion or Jerusalem. It is a kingdom. It is a bride. Here (as in the forty-sixth and forty-eighth Psalms) we have a City of God, enclosed and fenced, situated on the mountains, with strong foundations. This implies elevation, glory, strength, organization. And this City of God becomes the centre of some strange and resistless attraction. The most hostile and remote nations seek to be enrolled among her citizens. A thrill of exultation runs through the Psalmist's style, as his heart overflows with joy.

The eighty-seventh Psalm marks a turning-point in Revelation. It stands absolutely alone up to its own time, and, indeed, it may almost be said, even afterward, in one important particular. It shows that the unification of nations is to be effected by the welding power of a spiritual influence hitherto unknown. And it becomes more remarkable if we attribute it to the times of Hezekiah, and (with the inscription) to the sons of Korah. "The Korahite author of the Psalm, himself a chief singer in the sanctuary," writes the Bishop of Lincoln, "does not grudge the admission of foreign nations into its sacred choir, but with generous and large-hearted sympathy rejoices in the prospect." Thus the Psalmist here touches one distinctive peculiarity of the Christian Church. This is a great missionary Psalm. *Bishop W. Alexander.*

This short Psalm is by emphasis the missionary lyric of the Psalter. It transcends all other utterances by its startling statements of the spiritual unity one day to be effected. Elsewhere we read of a victorious chieftain who dashes in pieces all opposition and becomes sole ruler, leading rival kings in the long array of his triumph. Or we are told of the exaltation of Zion's hill above all other hills so that from all directions the nations flow to it, attracted by its glory and seeking to be enlightened by its teachings. Or it is predicted that one day in every place from the rising of the sun to his going down incense and a pure offering shall be presented to the Lord of Hosts. These are glowing prospects, and may well enkindle the believer's hope and zeal, but the Psalm before us reaches a higher mark in that it selects as specimens just those nations which had been conspicuous for ages as wicked oppressors of the covenant race, and declares that they shall come into close union with the people of God, and that not under compulsion nor influenced by secular considerations, but by a new birth, so that they are sincerely welcomed as brothers. "God Himself receives each one as a child newly born into the family, acknowledges him as a son, and enrolls him with His own hand as in the sacred register of the household." What a conception is thus given of the brotherhood of all nations and of their final incorporation into a single state, and that state the city of God! *Chambers.*

PSALM LXXXVIII.

A SONG, A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH ; FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO MAHALATH
LEANNOTH. MASCHIL OF HEMAN THE EZRAHITE.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 O LORD, the God of my salvation,
I have cried day and night before thee :</p> <p>2 Let my prayer enter into thy presence ;
Incline thine ear unto my cry :</p> <p>3 For my soul is full of troubles,
And my life draweth nigh unto Sheol.</p> <p>4 I am counted with them that go down into
the pit ;
I am as a man that hath no help :</p> <p>5 Cast off among the dead,
Like the slain that lie in the grave,
Whom thou rememberest no more ;
And they are cut off from thy hand.</p> <p>6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
In dark places, in the deeps.</p> <p>7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
And thou hast afflicted me with all thy
waves. [Selah]</p> <p>8 Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from
me ;
Thou hast made me an abomination unto
them :
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.</p> <p>9 Mine eye wasteth away by reason of affliction :
I have called daily upon thee, O LORD,</p> | <p>I have spread forth my hands unto thee.</p> <p>10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ?
Shall they that are deceased arise and praise
thee ? [Selah]</p> <p>11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the
grave ?
Or thy faithfulness in Destruction ?</p> <p>12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark ?
And thy righteousness in the land of forget-
fulness ?</p> <p>13 But unto thee, O LORD, have I cried,
And in the morning shall my prayer come
before thee.</p> <p>14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul ?
Why hidest thou thy face from me ?</p> <p>15 I am afflicted and ready to die from my
youth up :
While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.</p> <p>16 Thy fierce wrath is gone over me ;
Thy terrors have cut me off.</p> <p>17 They came round about me like water all the
day long ;
They compassed me about together.</p> <p>18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from
me,
And mine acquaintance into darkness.</p> |
|---|--|

THIS is the darkest, saddest Psalm in all the Psalter. It is one wail of sorrow from beginning to end. It is the only Psalm in which the expression of feeling, the pouring out of the burdened heart before God, fails to bring relief and consolation. In every other instance, however heavy the gloom, however oppressed and dejected the spirit of the sufferer, prayer and supplication are mingled with thanksgiving, the accents of lamentation are changed into the notes of triumph, the darkness of midnight gives way to the brightness of faith's morning-dawn. The deeper the sorrow at the opening, the greater the joy at the close. But here the darkness continues to the end. There is no confidence expressed that prayer will be heard, no hope uttered, much less any triumph. The Psalm ends with complaint, as it began. Its last word is "darkness." One ray of light only struggles through the gloom, one star pierces that thick

midnight blackness ; it is the name by which the Psalmist addresses God : "O God of *my salvation*." That he can address God by that name is a proof that faith and hope are not dead within him ; it is the pledge of his deliverance, though he cannot yet taste its comfort. There is but one such Psalm, as if to teach us that our Father's will concerning us is not to leave us in our dejection, but, in answer to the prayer of faith, to lift us out of it ; there is one, that we may remember that even His truest servants may be called upon "to walk in darkness and have no light," that thus they may be the better trained, like a child holding his father's hand in the dark, "to trust in the name of the Lord, to stay themselves upon their God."

As to the author, and the circumstances under which the Psalm was written, various conjectures have been made, but they are really worth nothing. One thing only is clear, that it

is not a national Psalm, and that it does not deplore any *national* calamity. It is throughout personal and individual. P.

There is one word of trust, inseparable from inward hopefulness, in the beginning; the Psalmist knows that the Lord is the God of his salvation; but that word occurs but once, and finds no echo in the succeeding strains. Death is nigh at hand (v. 3), all strength exhausted (v. 4); as one already occupying the grave (v. 5) the sufferer lies in darkness, overwhelmed by God's wrath (v. 6); forsaken of all friends, an object of loathing to them, shut up in prison (v. 8), he is still praying, urgently and without ceasing (vs. 9, 13), yet finds no response; from his youth ever on the point of death, distracted by the terrors of God, crushed by His fierce wrath, he lies now without lover or friend, with but one acquaintance left, even the darkness of Sheol. We have the portraiture of an individual, highly gifted, but subjected to every affliction which can try a faithful servant of God. *Cook.*

What trouble of wounded spirit some of God's children have felt in former times, others dear to God may find in after ages. They must comfort themselves in this, that other saints have been under like affliction; for this Psalm is appointed to "give instruction;" it is "*Maschil of Heman.*" Such as are most afflicted in spirit and do flee to God for reconciliation and consolation through Christ have no reason to suspect themselves that they are not esteemed of and loved as dear children, because they feel so much of God's chastening; for here is a saint who hath drunken of that cup, as deep as any who shall read this Psalm. *Dickson.*

The Psalm is designed to express one particular stage of consolation, viz., the earliest one of all, that which consists in the simple expression of the sorrow itself, only with this addition, that it expresses it as in the presence of God, and as an address to Him. All its expression indeed is that of grief; but that very expression is only one stage of consolation. The grief is relieved by giving due and reverential vent to it. A surface of evil is accompanied by a reserve and undercurrent of hope, and a grief externally unchecked proceeds upon an understanding that it is seen and compassionated by One who is able to remove it. Such a Psalm is wanted, as being the representation of one particular stage and form of consolation in affliction. This stage of consolation has its own peculiar and characteristic graces, which entitle it to such recognition. The earlier stages of consolation are nearer the beginning of things, closer to the

fountain-head. In them the simple voice of Divine love speaks before man has yet added anything of his own strength and effort to it. The greatest victories of reason or of faith do not point so directly or so immediately to the one source of all consolation as that first stage and beginning of it which consists in the soul's simple expression of its grief, and no more. And this Psalm reminds us of a great truth respecting this dispensation of things. The world does not contain much positive and pure happiness, and the satisfactions it does supply are rather of a secondary sort, remedial to dissatisfaction. Let us be content with moderate, with secondary, satisfactions. A remedial system, if it is solid and effective, is not to be underrated, as if it were not worth enjoying. Let us bear affliction with a single view to greater self-control, more resignation, more humility, ever strongly impressed with the great utility and serviceableness of it, the impossibility of growing in grace without it. *Mozley.*

1. The Psalmist finds himself in the gloomiest possible condition, but he does not despair; he remains turned with his complaints to Jehovah, and calls Him the God of his salvation. This *direct* resort in prayer to the God of salvation is the fundamental characteristic of all faith. D.—The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him. While the living God can be spoken of as the life of our salvation, our hope will not quite expire. S.

Cried day and night. No man knows what mercies or what miseries a day may bring forth; what good or what evil, what afflictions or what temptations a day may bring forth; and, therefore, a man need every day be in his closet with God, that he may be prepared and fitted to entertain and improve all the occurrences and emergencies that may attend him in the course of his life. *T. Brooks.*

5. His eye is looking down into the darkness, he sees himself already numbered with the dead. But what are the dead? Beings who "know not anything," "clean forgotten, out of mind," beings whom God Himself remembers not. "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee;" this was the feeling, not of Hezekiah only, but of all the Old Testament saints, in seasons of gloom and despondency. It could not be otherwise till the bright light of Christ's resurrection was cast upon the grave and the world beyond. P.

Cut off from thy hand. Never look upon yourself as *cut off* from life and from enjoy-

ment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the body of which Christ is the Head. Some must suffer and some must serve. Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, nor envy those who are running; you have a work to do. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking, scarcely showing life. Fear not; if He your heavenly Master has given it to you to do, it is *His* work, and He will bless it. *Anon.*

9. Mine eye mourneth, I have called. Weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: "*Mine eye mourns*," but "*I cry unto Thee daily*." Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears." *H.*—As a little child stretches out its hands to its mother while it cries, so did this afflicted child of God. He prayed all over, his eyes wept, his voice cried, his hands were outstretched, and his heart broke. This was prayer indeed. *S.*

10. The language refers to what takes place in the unseen world, not at the resurrection. (Compare Isa. 14 : 9.) The expostulation is like that of Job: "If a man die, shall he live again?" There is no question of the general resurrection, but only the improbability that God should restore to life one who was already dead. *P.*

10-12. In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God: "wonders," "lovingkindness," "faithfulness," and "righteousness." These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by Divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him; and yet (so mysterious are the ways of God!) that spot was made the very place where those attributes were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul. *J. C. Philpot.*

11. Shall Thy lovingkindness. The plea for prolonged life thus rests upon a deep feeling of God's love; the answer, however, was reserved for a future revelation. The accumulation of expressions is noticeable, "the grave" or sepulchre; "destruction" or "Abaddon," as in Job 26 : 6; 28 : 22 (the word occurs elsewhere only in Job, and in Prov. 15 : 11); "the dark," as in Job 10 : 21; "the land of

forgetfulness," in the twofold sense, where the dead have no remembrance, and where they are wholly forgotten. *Cook.*

12. Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark, and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? These are varied metaphorical descriptions of the state of death, considered negatively as the privation or the opposite of life. *Darkness* is here opposed to the *light of life* or *of the living*. The land of forgetfulness, where men forget (Eccl. 9 : 5, 6, 10), and are forgotten (Psalm 31 : 12). *A.*

13. But as for me, emphatic; though thus at the very edge of death, though bowed down with the heavy load of affliction, still I look to Thee. This unwearied "continuing instant in prayer" is the victory of faith in the midst of trials which, but for this, would end in despair. It had been one life-long suffering *from his youth up*, yet still his earnest pleading had never ceased. Such prayers are those "unutterable groanings" of which Paul speaks. *P.*

Go to prayer in the cold to get heat. Go to it in the dark to wait and watch for the light. Go to it without inclination, pleading the promise of God's Spirit to give you inclination. All this in the rational conviction that as religion is your greatest practical concern, God will be waiting on His part to open the gate for you; to greet, accept, and bid you everlasting welcome. There is no person living who will not thus, after some due time, be established in the faith, and filled with the revelation of God. *Bushnell.*

14. We may put these questions to the Lord, nay, we ought to do so. It is not undue familiarity, but holy boldness. He cannot act toward us in other than a right and gracious manner, therefore for every stroke of His rod there is a sufficient reason in the judgment of His loving heart; let us try to learn that reason and profit by it.

16. Since Jesus bore my guilt as my substitute, my Judge cannot punish me, but my Father can and will correct me. Under a sense of the Father's averted face the dear, broken-down child may be laid in the dust and covered with wretchedness, and yet for all that he may be accepted and beloved of the Lord all the while. *S.*

18. Look at the threefold loss bewailed in the text. There are, or ought to be, three circles round every man like the belts or rings round a planet—love, friendship, and acquaintanceship. Love is the nearest, while, at the same time, it lends its value to the other two. Friendship and acquaintanceship have no real pith, or sub-

stance, or value in them except as they are permeated by the spirit of the nearest circle. The three circles are needed by every man for the proper health and balance of his nature. No man suffices for himself. He needs others, as they need him. In proportion to the number and closeness of the ties in life is the pain in reserve for men. Strange life this, in which our best is the most subject to suffering, and pays a penalty as if it were the worst ! The thinking of departed friends will help us to realize our own death. It is of the highest moment that we should realize death, for without this we do not realize eternity, sin, or God. Thinking of our departed will help to take away the bitterness of death. Death is but going as they have gone ; it is just sharing with them. Death gets identified with the thought of father, or mother, or wife, or child ; and we feel that we dare not and cannot shrink from going to them. Thinking of the departed will enable us to realize immortality. They live, these departed ones ; if truth and love are real, they live. Death can no

more touch their souls than the stormy waves can quench the stars. Thinking of the departed will take away the besetting feeling of solitude connected with death. What a glow it sheds over the future ! How rich and full it makes it to think of meeting again some who have gone before. Their horizon is wide now. They have had experience of which we cannot form even a conception ; but we know that no distance of time, no range of knowledge, no height or depth of experience, can ever alter their love to us. *J. Leckie.*

With this complaint the harp drops out of the poet's hand. He becomes silent and waits for God to solve the riddle of this affliction. We may infer from the Book of Job that He really appeared to him. He is far more faithful than men. No soul that in the midst of wrath lays hold of His love, whether it be with firm or trembling hand, is lost. D.—The ear remains in suspense, until the majestic eighty-ninth Psalm shall burst upon it like a bright resurrection-morning. *W. Kay.*

PSALM LXXXIX.

MASCHIL OF ETHAN THE EZRAHITE.

1 I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever :

With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever ;

Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant ;

4 Thy seed will I establish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations.
[Selah]

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD ;

Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.

6 For who in the skies can be compared unto the LORD ?

Who among the sons of the mighty is like unto the LORD,

7 A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones,

And to be feared above all them that are round about him ?

8 O LORD God of hosts,

Who is a mighty one, like unto thee, O JAH ?
And thy faithfulness is round about thee.

9 Thou rulest the pride of the sea :

When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain ;

Thou hast scattered thine enemies with the arm of thy strength.

11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine :

The world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

12 The north and the south, thou hast created them ;

- Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.
- 13 Thou hast a mighty arm :
Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.
- 14 Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne :
Mercy and truth go before thy face.
- 15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound :
They walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.
- 16 In thy name do they rejoice all the day :
And in thy righteousness are they exalted.
- 17 For thou art the glory of their strength :
And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.
- 18 For our shield belongeth unto the LORD ;
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.
- 19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy saints,
And saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty ;
I have exalted one chosen out of the people.
- 20 I have found David my servant ;
With my holy oil have I anointed him :
- 21 With whom my hand shall be established ;
Mine arm also shall strengthen him.
- 22 The enemy shall not exact upon him ;
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
- 23 And I will beat down his adversaries before him,
And smite them that hate him.
- 24 But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him ;
And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
- 25 I will set his hand also on the sea,
And his right hand on the rivers.
- 26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.
- 27 I also will make him *my* firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
- 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
And my covenant shall stand fast with him.
- 29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.
- 30 If his children forsake my law,
And walk not in my judgments ;
- 31 If they break my statutes,
And keep not my commandments ;
- 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,
And their iniquity with stripes.
- 33 But my mercy will I not utterly take from him,
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
- 34 My covenant will I not break,
- Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
- 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness ;
I will not lie unto David ;
- 36 His seed shall endure for ever,
And his throne as the sun before me.
- 37 It shall be established for ever as the moon,
And *as* the faithful witness in the sky. [Selah]
- 38 But thou hast cast off and rejected,
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
- 39 Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant :
Thou hast profaned his crown *even* to the ground.
- 40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges ;
Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.
- 41 All that pass by the way spoil him :
He is become a reproach to his neighbours.
- 42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries ;
Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
- 43 Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword,
And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
- 44 Thou hast made his brightness to cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.
- 45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened :
Thou hast covered him with shame. [Selah]
- 46 How long, O LORD, wilt thou hide thyself for ever ?
How long shall thy wrath burn like fire ?
- 47 O remember how short my time is :
For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men !
- 48 What man is he that shall live and not see death,
That shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol ? [Selah]
- 49 Lord, where are thy former mercies,
Which thou swarest unto David in thy faithfulness ?
- 50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants ;
How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty peoples ;
- 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD,
Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.
- 52 BLESSED BE THE LORD FOR EVERMORE.
AMEN, AND AMEN.

THE inscription assigns this Psalm to Ethan the Ezrahite, the colleague of Asaph and Heman. Supposing it to have been composed toward the end of his life, some few years after the death of Solomon, every portion of the Psalm finds a perfect explanation in the circumstances of that period. It is written not by the king, but by one closely connected with him; by a man specially conversant with the Divine promises and terms of the covenant with the family of David. The king had been subjected to severest chastisement, an object of God's wrath (v. 38); his crown had been dishonored (v. 39); the frontiers of his territory had been broken down, his strongholds ruined, his adversaries had prevailed and triumphed over him, his attempts at resistance had failed at once and ignominiously, his glory had passed away, his throne was cast down, old age has come on him in early manhood, he is covered with shame. Each of these points tallies exactly with the facts recorded of the invasion of Shishak, whose enormous army overran the whole country, destroyed the strongholds which had been fortified by Rehoboam, and who reduced the kingdom for a time to a state of vassalage, which is expressly stated to have been a punishment for the sins of the princes, and to have effected its object; for when the king "humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him;" for "yet in Judah there were good things." (See 2 Chron. 12 : 1-12, especially vs. 4, 5, 8, and 12.) The tone of hopefulness, which, notwithstanding the terrible suffering, pervades the Psalm, is thus accounted for, and is strikingly unlike the forebodings of the prophets who were commissioned to announce the ruin of the descendants of Josiah, especially of Jehoiakin, of whom it was expressly said, no more of his seed should "prosper sitting on the throne of David." (See Jer. 22 : 24-30.) *Cook.*

The Psalm opens with a reference to the promise given to David (2 Sam. 7 : 8). This promise, and the attributes of God on which the promise rests, and which are the great pledge of its fulfilment, form the subject of the poet's grateful acknowledgment, before he passes to the mournful contrast presented by the ruin of the house of David and the blighting of his people's hopes. He turns to the glorious past, that by its aid he may rise out of the grief and discouragement of the present. He takes the promise and turns it into a song. He dwells upon it and lingers over it. He dwells on that which is the ground and pillar of the promise, the faithfulness of God; and then he first lifts his loud lament over the disasters which have befallen his king and

people, speaking out his disappointment till his words sound like a reproach; and next pleads earnestly with God that He would not suffer his enemies to triumph. P.

The majestic COVENANT PSALM, according to the Jewish arrangement, closes the third book of the Psalms. It is the utterance of a believer, in presence of great national disaster, pleading with his God, urging the grand argument of covenant engagements, and expecting deliverance and help because of the faithfulness of Jehovah. This is most fitly called a Maschil, for it is most instructive. No subject is more important or is so fully the key to all theology as that of the covenant. S.

1. I will sing. The Psalmist has a sad complaint to make, yet he begins with songs of praise; for we must in everything, in every state, give thanks. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let complaint, therefore, be turned into thanksgiving. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God, yet we must abide by this principle, that God's mercies are inexhaustible, and His truth inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing of them in heaven, world without end; and this is *singing of the mercies of the Lord forever*. H.

Sing of mercies. Mercies are love's messengers, sent from heaven to win our hearts to love again, and entice us thither. Our mercies, therefore, should be used to this end. That mercy that doth not increase, or excite and help our love, is abused and lost, as seed that is buried when it is sowed, and never more appeareth. Earthly mercies point to heaven, and tell us whence they come, and for what. Like the flowers of the spring, they tell us of the reviving approaches of the sun; but, like foolish children, because they are near us, we love the flowers better than the sun; forgetting that the winter is drawing on. *Baxter.*

2. This "*mercy built up forever*" is the glorious and gracious fabric of our salvation, founded in the eternal purpose of God; carried into execution by the labors and the death of Jesus Christ, and then applied and brought home to the heart by the illuminating and converting power of the Holy Ghost. This is that "mercy" which is "built up forever." It was planned from everlasting, and will know no ruin or decay through the illimitable line of eternity itself. It stands on a rock, and is immovable as

the rock on which it stands, the threefold rock of God's inviolable decree, of Christ's finished redemption, and of the Spirit's never-failing faithfulness. *Toplady.*

Thy faithfulness. *Faithfulness* is the mercy of God's mercies, the brightest jewel in the crown of goodness. Unchangeable love and immutable promises demand everlasting songs. In times of trouble it is the Divine faithfulness which the soul hangs upon; this is the bower anchor of the soul, its holdfast, and its stay. Because God is, and ever will be, faithful, we have a theme for song which will never be worn out, never be disproved, never be unnecessary. S.

Therefore mercy shall be built up forever, because thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. Though our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are *established in the very heavens*—that is, in His eternal counsels; they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth. The stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's Word; the heavens may be clouded by vapors arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched, they cannot be changed. H.

3, 4. These are the words of God, the sum of His promise as given in 2 Sam. 7. They are introduced with remarkable abruptness, standing alone in their forcible brevity, while the Psalmist passes on to celebrate at length the might and faithfulness of the Promiser. In the nineteenth verse he returns to the promise, expands and dwells upon it.

5. At first sight the passage which follows, to v. 18, appears to break the train of thought. But the object of the Psalmist is to place in the strongest light those attributes of God on which the *fulfilment* of His promise depends, for "in a promise everything depends upon the person who promises." The question therefore occurs, "Has he the will and the power to fulfil the promise?" Hence the Psalmist dwells first upon God's power as exhibited and confessed in creation, then upon His righteousness, goodness, and truth, as manifested especially to his people. P.

5-8. Nothing can be more simple than the structure of these verses, which are not more *evidently* poetical in Hebrew than they are in English; and yet, such is the sublimity of the thought expressed, that none can fail to be affected by it, as by the most perfect form of metrical language. Indeed, so successfully and completely is the *effect* of poetry produced, that

a somewhat rude prose translation of the Psalms, either in Latin or in English, is available for the purposes of *music* in a way that no other human compositions have ever been, or can be. Certainly, if a model were wanted which should serve as a universal type of poetry, we should turn instinctively to the Old Testament; for there, and there only, the phenomenon presents itself of poetry which again and again has been proved to be so in the languages of the east and west, and north and south. *S. Leathes.*

5. Thy wonders. As the heavens are a proof of God's power, in respect of His first framing them out of nothing; so are they a pattern of God's faithfulness, in their constant and orderly motion according to His word since their framing: "*The heavens shall praise Thy faithfulness also.*" However the power and faithfulness of God may be seen and heard in the work and speech of the heavens by all men, yet are they not observed and hearkened unto except in the Church by God's children; therefore saith he, "*They shall praise Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*" *Dickson.*—Thy faithfulness and the truth of Thy promise, that rock on which the Church is built, shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to His faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is, that there is a promise, and that He is faithful who has promised. *Anon.*

7. To be feared. Reverence in a reasonable creature is his conscious bowing of himself before One whom he knows to be worthy of such adoration from him, and whose presence and works he sees ever around and within himself; so that to such an one all is from God and all is leading up to God. *Bishop Wilberforce.*—Reverence is fear tempered by love. In the Old Testament, the fear predominated, in the New Testament, the love; but the sentiment of reverence pervades all religion on earth and in heaven. Whether as sacred dread or loving fear, it abideth always. *W. B. Pope.*

There is beauty in reverence, there is joy in reverence, there is an uplifting and an ennobling power in reverence. He who lacks a reverent spirit lacks an attribute of the truest manhood. He who is reverent, and who gives reverence wherever it is due, shows more of the likeness, and grows more in the likeness, of Him who has commanded reverence as a duty, and to whom is due the supremest duty of reverence. Only in a reverent attitude is there the possibility of progress in the line of God's plans and God's providences; for at the best we cannot fully know God, and we must give reverent trust be-

yond our sphere of knowledge and of sight.
H. C. T.

8. *O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? Or Jehovah, God of Hosts, who is like Thee, Mighty Jah.* Alexander remarks, that the infinite superiority of God to men and angels is here expressed, or rather indicated, by an accumulation of descriptive titles. Here we have the name which displays His self-existence, the title which denotes His dominion over all His creatures, and an adjective which sets forth the power with which he exercises His sovereignty. Yet this great and terrible God has entered into covenant with men! Who would not reverence Him with deepest love? S.

Thy faithfulness is round about Thee. Whatever He doth, He is mindful of His faithfulness and covenant, before and behind, and on each side; He can look no way, but that is in His eye. And though He employ angels, and send them down into the world, and they stand round about Him, yet He hath better harbingers than these, mercy, and truth, and faithfulness, that wait round about Him. T. Goodwin.

9. Thou stillest them. Let not faith go to sleep in our hearts when we have to face the storms and billows of this world. Do not be overcome by the waves which agitate the heart. If the wind has come down upon us, if it has stirred up the feelings of our soul, let us not despair; let us wake up Christ, that we may sail on in quietness, and reach our country. Aug.

9, 10. The power of God in stilling the raging of the sea symbolizes His power to subdue the rebellious raging of the nations. Its introduction is fitly followed in the second line of the couplet by the mention of Rahab, a prophetic name of Egypt, and other enemies of God as scattered by His power. De Witt.

10. *Thou didst crush, like the slain, Rahab; with Thine arm of strength Thou didst scatter Thy foes.* This relates wholly to the sea of nations, in which Egypt stands first, as the earliest national enemy of Israel, and also perhaps because the power of Pharaoh, at the exodus, was literally broken in the sea. A.

11. *The world and the fulness thereof, all the riches contained in it, all the inhabitants of it, both the tenements and the tenants, they are all Thine; for Thou hast founded them.* And the Founder may justly claim to be the Owner. He specifies the remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles which are uninhabited and little known; *"Thou hast created them, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them."* H.

In Col. 1:16 the whole universe is, as it were, set in one class, and Christ alone over against it. No language could be more emphatically all-comprehensive. Four times in one sentence we have "all things"—the whole universe—repeated, and traced to Him as Creator and Lord. "In the heavens and the earth" is quoted from Genesis, and is intended here, as there, to be an exhaustive enumeration of the creation according to place. "Things visible or invisible" again includes the whole under a new principle of division; there are visible things in heaven, as sun and stars, there may be invisible on earth, but wherever and of whatever sort they are, He made them. "Whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers," an enumeration evidently alluding to the dreamy speculations about an angelic hierarchy filling the space between the far-off God, and men immersed in matter. So Paul groups together the whole universe of created beings, actual or imaginary, and then high above it, separate from it, its Lord and Creator, its upholder and end, he points to the majestic person of the only-begotten Son of God, His Firstborn, higher than all the rulers of the earth, whether human or superhuman. A. M.

12. Tabor and Hermon. Mount Tabor represents the east side of the Holy Land, and Mount Hermon the west side. In connection with "the north and the south," in the preceding line, they fill out the conception of universal joy in the creative and sustaining power of God. De Witt.—They are mentioned as conspicuous mountains in a mountain land. Tabor, "remarkable for the verdure, which climbs—a rare sight in Eastern scenery—to its very summit;" Hermon, as its name imports, "The lofty, prominent peak," crowned with snow, the most striking of all the mountains of Palestine, are fit representatives of the whole country. P.

Mount Tabor, now *Jebel et Tûr*, is one of the most striking and celebrated mountains of the Holy Land. It is not lofty, only 1400 feet above the plain, which here is 500 feet above the sea; but its peculiarly isolated position, standing out into the plain completely severed from the bank of Galilean hills behind it, its remarkable symmetry of form and graceful outline, its wooded slopes, in a land where timber is so scarce, its shaded leafy glades, have won for it universal admiration. The ascent to the top of Tabor is not difficult, and on its summit is a flattened platform, strewn with ruins of considerable importance, but now utterly uninhabited. The view from the summit gives the best idea of this part of Palestine. All the Plain of Esdraelon is

spread like a map before us, from the Mediterranean past the ridge of Carmel, a vast expanse of green, to Jebel Duhy, with Nain and Endor in front and Mount Gilboa peering out behind them ; then the slope down to the Valley of the Jordan by Bethshean, and the river for many miles up, till the eye rests on the Sea of Galilee, the south part of which is shut out from view, and the dark walls of the mountains of Gilead stretching far away. To the north the Horns of Hattin stand out over the hidden Plain of Gennesaret, and beyond is the high table-land of Bashan, as far as the rugged Hauran, while over Hattin towers the snowy peak of Hermon, and to the northeast the southern roots of Lebanon stretch to the sea. (See Vol. III., p. 187.) Hermon was the great landmark of the whole country to the northward. From the plains of the coast, from the Jordan valley, from Gilead and the highlands of Bashan alike, that white-crowned cone towers into the blue sky. *Tristram.*

14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne. The Holy Ghost alludeth to the thrones of earthly princes, which were underpropped with pillars, as Solomon's throne with lions, that were both a support and an ornament to it. Now, saith the Psalmist, justice and judgment are the pillars upon which God's throne standeth ; as Calvin expoundeth it, the robe and diadem, the purple and sceptre, the regalia with which God's throne is adorned. *Swinnock.*

The Christian faith has come to be less and less regarded as a commanding and mighty power from heaven, a voice of authority, a law of holy life, but more and more as an easy-going guide to a future happiness and an indiscriminate salvation. The Gospel is a gift of grace ; but if it does not keep the disciple out of the schemes of sharpers and liars, the grace has miscarried. The Gospel is love ; but it has a law-element in it, too, which the saintliest Christian never outgrows. The Old Testament goes into the New. The Saviour says explicitly He came not to destroy the law, but to fill it full, and that He is coming again to judge every follower by his deeds. If you cut the New Testament apart from the Old, your one Bible is gone, and rationalism will pick the fragments to pieces at its leisure. We want that elder and eternal Testament which gives us the text, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." See how that word "righteous" studs all the Scripture-pages, and how the glorious reality it represents is the steadfast foundation of the welfare of souls, from the first

creation on to the new heavens and the new earth. F. D. H.

Mercy and truth go before Thy face. Not in the sense of 'preceding, but of standing in the presence of God ; the two great attributes of the Lord God are, so to speak, personified, thus adumbrating the doctrine to be revealed, mercy incarnate in the Son, truth disclosed in the Spirit, that "leadeth into all truth." *Cook.*

Justice and judgment are the basis of the Divine government, the sphere within which His sovereignty moves. God as a sovereign is never unjust or unwise. He is too holy to be unrighteous, too wise to be mistaken ; this is constant matter for joy to the upright in heart. "*Mercy and truth shall go before Thy face.*" They are the harbingers and heralds of the Lord ; He calls these to the front to deal with guilty and changeful man ; He makes them, in the person of the Lord Jesus, to be His ambassadors, and so poor, guilty man is enabled to endure the presence of his righteous Lord. If mercy had not paved the way, the coming of God to any man must have been swift destruction. Thus has the poet sung the glories of the covenant God. S.

The sublimest spirits in heaven were at a loss how to unravel the difficulty and to find out the miraculous way to reconcile infinite mercy with inflexible justice—how to satisfy the demands of the one and the requests of the other. God was to overcome Himself before He restored man. In this exigence His mercy excited His wisdom to interpose as an arbiter, which, in the treasure of its incomprehensible light, found out an admirable expedient to save man without prejudice to His other perfections. And in the plan which was actually devised, there is a sweet concurrence of all the attributes. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Who can count up this heap of wonders ? Who can unfold all the treasures of this mysterious love ? The tongue of an angel cannot explicate it according to its dignity ; it is the fairest copy of the Divine wisdom, the consummation of all God's counsels, wherein all the attributes are displayed in their brightest lustre ; it is here the manifold wisdom of God appears. The angels of light bend themselves with extraordinary application of mind and ardent affections to study the rich and unsearchable variety that is in it. Only the same understanding comprehends it which contrived it. But as one that views the ocean, though he cannot see its bounds or bottom, yet sees so much as to know that that vast collection of

waters is far greater than what is within the compass of his short sight, so, though we cannot understand all the depths of that immense wisdom which ordered the way of our salvation, yet we may discover so much as to know with the apostle that it surpasses knowledge. *Bates.*

15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. The trumpets sounded in token of joy at the great festivals, and chiefly on the first day of the seventh month, the feast of trumpets, and on extraordinary occasions, especially after the yearly atonement, on the day of jubilee, the tenth day of the seventh month of the fiftieth year, proclaiming liberty to bondmen, and restoration of their inheritance to them that had forfeited it (Lev. 25 : 8-10). As the jubilee joy did not come till after the atonement, so no Gospel joy and liberty are ours till first we know Christ as our atonement. *Fausset.*

—The sound of the jubilee-trumpet was a joyful sound to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The Gospel is indeed a joyful sound—a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the *sound of abundance of rain*; blessed are the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome. *H.*

The text does not say, they shall *sit down* in the light of Thy countenance; or, they shall *lie down* in the light of Thy countenance; but “*they shall walk* in the light of Thy countenance.” That holy walking which God’s Spirit enables all His people to observe is a continued, progressive motion in every good word and work. And the self-same “light of God’s countenance” in which the believer is enabled to walk will keep him in a walking and in a working state to the end. *Toplady.*

16. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day. To the soul which, in Christ Jesus, has entered into covenant with God, every attribute is a fountain of delight. There is no hour in the day, and no day in our life, in which we may not rejoice in the name, person, and character of the Lord. We need no other reason for rejoicing. *S.*—True religion is of right the happiest, gladdest thing in this world. It does not merely permit us to be glad, nor merely make it our duty to be glad. It offers such an opportunity, occasion, and reason for gladness, and turns everything into such a constant source of gladness, as nothing else on earth does or can do. It bids us “rejoice and be exceeding glad,” not to offset a gloom attending it, as we spice and sweeten medicines, but because it removes the cause of gloom from all things, and gives us power to turn the heaviest visitations themselves

into blessings. Many other things bring delights, but we are sure to find their stream more or less mixed with things distasteful. They who reject religion, and we in so far as we misconstrue it, close or obstruct the only path to the pure headwaters of joy. And true religion always was the gladdest thing in the world. It is the very recipe for giving everything a permanent gladness. Man has not always given it a glad key-note; but that was always man’s fault, not religion’s necessity; and “Blessed is,” and always was and will be, “the people that know the joyful sound” of true religion, and key their life and worship to that note. Religion is not jocund, hilarious, pleasant to the senses; but it is the only influence permanently effective to make us independent of such conditions, and blessed in them and without them. Israel’s religion was a silver trumpet call to glad rejoicing. *Cable.*

19. The mention of the king in the preceding verse leads now to the resumption and expansion of the promise given to David. The two aspects of God’s relation to David and his house and kingdom are herein presented to us, an outward and an inward, corresponding to the two great attributes of God which are praised in vs. 1-18, His omnipotence and His faithfulness. To the first of these belong, David’s exaltation to the throne (v. 19); God’s constant aid, and hence his victory over his foes (vs. 21-23), and extended dominion (vs. 21, 25). To the second, which is the most prominent, God’s fatherly relation to David’s seed, which is shown in the exaltation to the dignity of a son, who is also the firstborn, and therefore holds the pre-eminence above all kings (vs. 26, 27); accordingly an *everlasting* covenant made with him and his seed, and an everlasting kingdom (vs. 28, 29); hence, too, the transgressions of his sons cannot make the covenant void (vs. 33, 34); with the assurance finally repeated, that this covenant, which God has once confirmed by an oath, cannot lie, and that therefore the seed as well as the throne of David must endure as the very heavens. *P.*

19, 20. I have exalted one chosen out of the people. In his extraction, election, and exaltation, David was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus, who is the man of the people, the chosen of God, and the king of His Church. *S.*—He has exalted Him, by constituting Him the prophet, priest, and king of His Church; clothing Him with power, raising Him from the dead, and setting him at His own right hand. Whom God chooses and uses He will exalt. He has anointed Him, has qualified Him for His

office, and so confirmed Him in it, by giving Him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above His fellows. He is called *Messiah*, or *Christ*, the *Anointed*. In all this, He designed Him to be His own servant, for the accomplishing of His eternal purpose, and the advancement of the interests of His kingdom among men. H.

21. The almightiness of God abides permanently with Jesus in His work as Redeemer and Ruler of His people. The fulness of Divine power shall attend Him. This covenant promise ought to be urged in prayer before the Lord, for the great lack of the Church at this time is power. We have everything except the Divine energy, and we must never rest content until we see it in full operation among us, and then there will be no lack of force in any of our Church agencies. S.

25. His kingdom should be greatly enlarged; *I will set his hand in the sea*; he shall have the dominion of the seas, and the isles of the sea, and *his right hand in the rivers*, the inland countries that are watered with rivers. David's kingdom extended itself to the great sea, and the Red Sea, to the river of Egypt, and the River Euphrates. But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah that this has its full accomplishment. H.

26. My Father. Never until Christ uttered these words, never until He appeared on earth in humanity as the Son of God, did any man or any child of humanity address God in this endearing character. It was after Christ said, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father," that believers were enabled to look up to God and to say, "Abba, Father." Here you see distinctly that this applies to Christ. He was the first to say this; David did not say it. *Molyneux.*

27. My firstborn. As he calls me "Father," so I not only acknowledge him as my son, but as my firstborn, and therefore my heir. (So Israel is called the firstborn, Ex. 4 : 22). P.—The great Jehovah, the Maker and the Owner and the Ruler of the universe, hath said respecting His Christ, "I will make Him my firstborn;" that is, I will constitute Him the chief of all creatures, and the depository of all power, and the possessor of all privileges, and the heir of all creation. By way of excellence, *He is the firstborn*, "higher than all the kings of the earth," enjoying priority in point of time, and precedence in point of place. *Pitcairn.*—When all power was given to Christ both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto Him by the Father, then God made Him His firstborn, and far higher, more great

and honorable than the kings of the earth, for He is the King of kings, *angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to Him* (1 Pet. 3 : 22).

28. *My mercy will I keep for Him*, to be disposed of by Him *forevermore*; in the channel of Christ's mediation all the streams of Divine goodness will forever run. Therefore it is the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ* which we look for unto eternal life (Jude 21; John 17 : 2). And as the mercy of God flows to us through Him, so the promise of God is, through Him, firm to us; *My covenant shall stand fast with Him*, both the covenant of redemption made with Him, and the covenant of grace made with us in Him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a Mediator (Heb. 8 : 6). The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis. H.—Is not Christ the Fountain of all mercy to us? Is it not the mercy of God the Father flowing to us through Christ that we enjoy? Is he not the Depository of it all? God says, then, I will keep it for Him; forever and ever shall it be lodged in Christ, and His people shall enjoy it throughout eternity. *Molyneux.*

30. There follows a paraphrase of 2 Sam. 7 : 14. The chastisement is a necessary part of the paternal relationship (Heb. 12). The sins of individuals will be punished by God's fatherly correction, but the covenant cannot cease, the promises made to the seed as a whole cannot be withdrawn. Their unfaithfulness cannot make the faithfulness of none effect. P.

30-34. God here says two things: first, that He will chastise them; next, that He will not, on that account, cast them out of His covenant. Oh, wonderful tempering of the kindness and severity of God! in which He finds His own glory, and believers their safety! *Daille.*—When our heavenly Father is, as it were, forced to put forth His anger, He then makes use of a father's rod, not an executioner's axe. He will neither break His children's bones, nor His own covenant. He lashes in love, in measure, in pity, and compassion. *T. Lye.*

33. My mercy will I not utterly take from him. If the covenant could be made void by our sins it would have been void long ere this. God may leave His people, and they may thereby suffer much and fall very low, but utterly and altogether He never can remove His love from them; for He adds, "*nor suffer My faithfulness to fail.*" Man fails in all points, but God in none. To be faithful is one of the eternal characteristics of God, in which He always places a great part of His glory; His truth is one of His peculiar treasures and crown jewels, and He will never endure that it should

be tarnished in any degree. This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off.

35. *Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David.* Because He could swear by no greater He swore by Himself, and by that peculiar attribute which is His highest glory, being the subject of threefold adoration by all the hosts of heaven. God here pledges the crown of His kingdom, the essence of His nature. In what stronger language can He express His unalterable adherence to the truth of His promise? We cannot imagine that God could lie, yet He puts it so, that if the covenant were not kept by Him, He would regard it as a lie. Here is ground for strong confidence. S.—When God plights His holiness He plights His right to the love, homage, and adoration of His creatures. He plights all claim upon their worship, veneration, and obedience. He virtually engages to abdicate His throne and to be stripped of the prerogatives that belong to Him, to lose His own self-respect, to forfeit forever His name, if He should be found unfaithful to His Word. What a security to the heirs of the promise! How can we hesitate in committing our souls, our interests for time and for eternity, to that everlasting covenant which is charged with the glory of God? What broader foundation could be laid for our faith? As if it were not enough to appeal to us upon the eternal principles of truth and justice and righteousness, as if these were too abstract and impalpable to arouse our sympathies and wake up a warm and living interest, God comes to us in a relation which is pre-eminently personal, and stands before us as one who has a Name to vindicate, and puts His faithfulness on a ground which, in the case of man, a creature like ourselves, we recognize as the most sacred and solemn of all sanctions. As certainly as God cannot deny Himself, as certainly as His own glory is the end of all His works, the scope of every manifestation of His being; as certainly as His own great name is dear to Him, so certainly shall every pledge of His love be redeemed. Not one word of all the good things He hath spoken shall ever fall to the ground. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord abideth forever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto us. *Thornwell.*

36. Endure forever. Thus far David's seed and throne did endure, that, notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued in the imperial dignity a very long time; that, as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it, and the

royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family; and that the family of David continued a family of distinction till that Son of David came whose throne should endure forever. If David's posterity in aftertimes should forsake God and their duty and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgments upon them and ruin the family; and yet He would not take away His lovingkindness from David nor break His covenant with him, for in the Messiah, who should come out of his loins, all these promises shall have their accomplishment to the full. If we apply it to Christ, by His seed we are to understand His subjects, all believers, His spiritual seed, the children which God has given Him (Heb. 2:13). This is that seed which shall be made to endure forever, and His throne in the midst of them, in the Church, in the heart, *as the days of heaven.* To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve and honor Him; *He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days.* This holy seed shall endure forever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more; and thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated; the kingdom of His grace shall continue through all the ages of time, and the kingdom of His glory to the endless ages of eternity. H.

The kingdom of David was an emblem, however faint, of that which would be erected by Jesus Christ; wonderfully preserved as was the throne of Judah, while the greatest monarchies were marked by perpetual vicissitudes; the kings of Israel were ever changing in their line, while the descendants of David maintained a direct succession. No Roman emperor, with the exception of Vespasian, was followed by his proper successor during a hundred and fifty years from the time of Julius Cæsar; they passed and chased one another like shadows. Here, meanwhile, "in the house of Judah," was a preternatural stability, destined as an image (though an imperfect image) of the fixed, indestructible empire of Jesus Christ. His throne has never been shaken for a moment; He has appeared without a rival in the field. Who has ever dared to question His pretensions? *who* has dared to challenge a comparison with Him in prophecies, in miracles, in virtues, in doctrines? Not a doubt has been entertained among competent judges of His being the true Messiah. *R. Hall.*

37. Naturally reads: "As the moon shall it [His throne] stand forever, and the witness in the heavens is suré;" the moon on the sky, and the sun perhaps as well, are the witness that God has measured the duration of this promise by the existence of the sun and the moon, hung out

before mortal eyes in the heavens. "Selah" fitly calls for special attention and meditation here, before the Psalmist passes on to other points. C.

46. The transition from expostulation to pleading, which of itself shows how the expostulation is to be understood. It is human weakness discovering to God its inmost heart. There is a sense of wrong, and the true man says that he feels it, speaks it out, and asks God to set it right. It is an example of the perpetual clash between convictions and facts. The pleading consists of two parts, each comprised in three verses. The argument of the first is the shortness of human life; that of the second, the dishonor cast upon God by the triumph of His enemies. P.

46-48. *Remember*, take into account. A great plea with God. The Psalmist is deeply impressed with the fleeting nature of all earthly things. Vanity seems to be written on all things under the sun. *Death* is the grand demonstration of the vanity of human things. Man's contemplations, desires, plans, purposes, proceedings, responsibilities, have a range beyond the boundaries of time. Death seems to cut them short and bring them to an abrupt and untimely end. *Sheol* is here equivalent to the grave. This trial of verses contains the plea that the life of man is vain, if it were not for the hopes founded on the promises of God. It is properly set apart by the Selah. M.

49-51. Here he comes to grand pleading, hand-to-hand work with the covenant angel. We may remind the Lord of His first deeds of love, His former love to His Church, His former favor to ourselves. Then may we plead His oath, and beg Him to remember that He has sworn to bless His chosen; and we may wrestle hard also, by urging upon Him His own character, and laying hold upon His inviolable truth. We may bring forth our strong reasons and debate the case with our condescending God, who has Himself said, "Come now, and let us reason together." S.

What had become of the loving-kindness of God, what of His faithfulness, what of His power? Ethan, in his report of the promise, answered his own difficulty. The covenant with David depended upon conditions. Ethan himself states the supreme condition in the words of the Divine Author of the covenant: "If David's children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their sin with scourges." Now, as always, the promises of God to His people are largely conditioned. If the gates of

hell shall not prevail against His Church, much short of this may happen as a consequence of the unfaithfulness of her members or her ministers. Of this let us be sure, that if God's promises seem to any to have failed, the fault lies not with Him, but with ourselves; it is we who have changed, not He. H. P. L.

52. The Doxology is no part of the original Psalm, but was added subsequently to mark the close of the book. P.

The Psalm is not directly Messianic; the whole tone of expostulation and prayer belongs to local and temporary circumstances; but the anticipations are grounded on promises which have their true fulfilment in Christ. It is a noble ode, and forms a fitting close to the book, which contains the deep teaching of seers trained in the school of David. The concluding words, though added to mark the completion of this division, seem to have a special connection with the beginning of the Psalm, and express the innermost and permanent conviction of the composer. *Cook.*

The idea of the *Covenant* on which Jehovah entered with Israel is the fundamental and principal idea of the entire Old Testament religion. Though the covenant is in idea a compact relation, involving a reciprocity of obligations, still the mutual obligations have been fixed wholly by the one side, by Jehovah in the exercise of His unconditioned freedom and independence. Jehovah, therefore, is the sole Founder of the Covenant. In the absolute freedom of His gracious will, He has chosen Israel from among all the peoples of the earth to be His peculiar people (Ex. 19 : 5 ; Amos 3 : 2). Thus, in consequence of *the election and the covenant*, Jehovah is the *God of Israel*, and Israel is His holy and peculiar people.

To devout Israelites *ceremonial* intercourse with Jehovah was, by the very fact of its externality, unsatisfactory; it could not in their eyes be what was intended in the covenant and the election. Every godly man, who carried the law of God in his heart and had his delight in the commands of Jehovah, every one who in any degree knew from his own intimate experience who the God of grace enlightens and leads the individual by His Holy Spirit, how inwardly near to Him accepted suppliants come, how He hears and answers them when they call upon Him, and what bliss it is to be able to call God his inheritance and his portion, would necessarily recognize in this *inwardness* of communion with his God what is *most of all essential to the realization of the idea of the covenant*. *Riehm.*

FOURTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

PSALMS XC.—CVI.

PSALM XC.

A PRAYER OF MOSES THE MAN OF GOD.

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| <p>1 LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place
In all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the
world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou
art God.
3 Thou turnest man to destruction [or, <i>dust</i>] ;
And sayest, Return, ye children of men.
4 For a thousand years in thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And as a watch in the night.
5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood ;
they are as a sleep :
In the morning they are like grass which
groweth up.
6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth
up ;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
7 For we are consumed in thine anger,
And in thy wrath are we troubled.
8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
Our secret sins in the light of thy counte-
nance.
9 For all our days are passed away in thy
wrath :
We bring our years to an end as a tale <i>that</i>
<i>is told</i> [or, a sound or sigh].</p> | <p>10 The days of our years are threescore years
and ten,
Or even by reason of strength fourscore
years ;
Yet is their pride but labour and sorrow ;
For it is soon gone, and we fly away.
11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger,
And thy wrath according to the fear that is
due unto thee ?
12 So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us an heart of wisdom.
13 Return, O LORD ; how long ?
And let it repent thee concerning thy ser-
vants.
14 O satisfy us in the morning with thy mercy ;
That we may rejoice and be glad all our
days.
15 Make us glad according to the days wherein
thou hast afflicted us,
And the years wherein we have seen evil.
16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory upon their children.
17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be
upon us :
And establish thou the work of our hands
upon us ;
Yea, the work of our hands establish thou
it.</p> |
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The Eternal God the only Refuge for Mortal Man.

THE Fourth Book, according to the ancient traditional division of the Psalter, opens with the oldest Psalm in the collection ; or rather

the author of the present arrangement, who was probably no other than Ezra, placed this sublime composition by itself, between the two great divisions of the book, containing respectively the earlier and later Psalms. It may therefore

be regarded as the heart or centre of the whole collection, and indeed as the model upon which even David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," formed that glorious body of psalmodic literature or hymnology, which, with its later but inspired and authoritative imitations, constitutes the present Book of Psalms. The date of the composition, though uncertain because not recorded, may with most probability be fixed near the close of the Error in the Wilderness, when the dying out of the older generation on account of their transgressions, and the threatened exclusion of Moses himself from the Promised Land, were exactly suited to produce such views of man's mortality and sinfulness as are here presented, but without destroying the anticipation of a bright futurity, such as really ensued upon the death of Moses, and is prospectively disclosed in the conclusion of this Psalm. Its great theme is the frailty and brevity of human life, considered as the consequence of sin, and as a motive to repentance and obedience. He first contrasts the eternity of God with the mortality of man (vs. 1-6), which is then described as the effect of the Divine wrath on account of sin (vs. 7-11), and made the ground of a prayer for the speedy restoration of the Divine favor (vs. 12-17). A.

The Fourth Book of the Psalms begins with a prayer of Moses, the man of God, which comes out of the dying off of the older generation during the march through the wilderness. There is scarcely any memorial of antiquity which so brilliantly justifies the testimony of antiquity concerning its origin as does this Psalm. Not alone with respect to its contents, but with respect to the form of its language, it is perfectly suitable to Moses. Even Hitzig can bring nothing against this view; for the objection that the author, in v. 1, glances back upon past generations, while Israel was only born in the time of Moses, is removed by the consideration that the existence of Israel reaches back into patriarchal times. *Delitzsch*.

The correctness of the title which ascribes the Psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances, as already stated; its resemblance to the Law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author. The arguments against its authenticity

have commonly been framed by a preposterous inversion of the evidence, converting into proofs of later date the very points of similarity which prove that this was the original and model Psalm, the primeval basis upon which even David reared a noble superstructure of his own. A.

There are important *internal* reasons which may be urged in favor of the composition of the Psalm by Moses, as announced in the title. The poem bears throughout the stamp of high antiquity; there is no other Psalm which so decidedly conveys the impression of being the original expression of the feelings to which it gives utterance. There is, moreover, no other Psalm which stands so much *by itself*, and for which parallel passages furnish so little kindred matter in its characteristic peculiarities. On the other hand, there occurs a series of striking allusions to the Pentateuch, especially to the poetical passages, and above all others to Deut. 32, allusions which are of a different kind from those which occur in other passages in the Psalms, and which do not appear, like them, to be *borrowed*. Luther remarks in the Psalm another peculiarity: "Just as Moses acts in teaching the Law, so does he in this prayer. For he preaches death, sin, and condemnation, in order that he may alarm the proud who are secure in their sins, and that he may set before their eyes their sin and evil, concealing, hiding nothing." The strong prominence given to the doctrine of *death as the wages of sin* is characteristic of the Psalm a doctrine of not frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture, and especially not in the Psalms, and which is proclaimed as distinctly and impressively as it is here only in the Pentateuch (Gen. 2, 3) and in those ordinances of the ceremonial law which threaten death. *Hengstenberg*.

This Psalm, which some one has called "a Psalm for every age," and of which Herder testified that it is "a wonderful, a striking poem, dating from the oldest part of Israel's history, pervaded by a deep and startling earnestness, stately and slow, but free from everything that savors of despair"—this is a Psalm which well might bear the name of Moses. In this poetic prayer it is as impossible to mistake the earnest spirit of the lawgiver as the faithful spirit of the mediator; and though there are particular expressions here and there which would be quite as suitable for other lips, and equally appropriate to other circumstances, yet the whole poem, which is quite inimitable, and in which there is a touching interchange of complaint and questioning, could, we believe, have arisen only in a heart like that of Moses,

and in such a period as has been named. *Van O.*—The contents of the Psalm, its profound earnestness, and solemn treatment of the theme of man's weakness and misery through sin, are worthy of Moses, and suitable to the close of his life in the desert. *Hupfield.*—There is something in the Psalm that is wonderfully striking and solemn, acquainting us with the profoundest depths of the Divine nature. These awful thoughts may well have occurred to Moses at the close of his wanderings; and the author, whoever he may be, is plainly a man grown gray with a vast experience, here taking his stand at the end of his earthly course. *Ewald.*

It is the oldest of stories, sung in this oldest of Psalms; of human weakness, turning in dismay from the change and decay about it, to find refuge in the eternity of God. The Psalm belongs to the nineteenth century no less than to Moses' time. It deals with universal and not with temporary and local truths. Let us not be repelled from it because its undertone is sad and solemn; for its lesson is wholesome if sad, bracing if bitter, and leading up to conclusions full of comfort and rest. In this Psalm we are not suffered to waste time in the attempt to comprehend the abstract truth of God's eternity. The truth itself is plainly shown to have a practical bearing upon our mortal life, and this is the chief end for which it is presented. We are lifted for the moment, in order that we may descend; suffered to grasp a few of the treasures of the Divine glory, that we may carry them back to glorify our earthly life. *V.*

It is in the main a Psalm of mortality; and yet its primary thought is not mortality, but eternity. It opens with the note of eternal being. The idea of the eternal stands as a great light in front of the darkness. Man is mortal, but *God is*; and God is the Eternal, the home, the dwelling-place, of all generations. This is the grand peculiarity of Hebrew and of Christian thought, that God is first, man only second; that the eternal Being is the true Being, the present visible or transitory being only the derivative being, appearing and then vanishing away, according to the direction of the other. But there is more in this brief word than the general assertion of eternal being, and of a great primary power directing, controlling, all nature and all life. The character of this Being is further so far defined. He is a Being full of affection, and care, and thoughtful and deliberate love. He is not only Creator; He is Father. The assurance is that we have a supreme Heart above us, responsive to our hearts; that there is a spiritual home encompassing us, a life that

changes not with the varying pulses of our thought and feeling. *J. Tulloch.*

The ninetyeth Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions, the deepest in feeling, the loftiest in theological conception, the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal, the Sovereign, and the Judge, and yet the refuge and the hope of men who, notwithstanding the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in Him; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near-at-hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of immortality; for in this very plaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these his few years of trouble, and their brevity and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety; the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance, the half-uttered blasphemy, the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous color upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish personal or relative. There are few, probably, among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes throughout this ode. Rightly attributed to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late, a lost age in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm undoubtedly is centuries older than the moralizings of that time when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind, the abstractions of the Greek philosophy. With this one Psalm only in view, if it were required of us to say, in brief, what we mean by the phrase, "The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry," we find our answer well condensed in this sample. This magnificent composition gives evidence not merely as to the mental qualities of the writer, but as to the tastes and habitudes of the writer's contemporaries, his hearers, and his readers; on these several points, *first*, the free and customary command of a poetic diction, and

its facile imagery, so that whatever the poetic soul would utter, the poet's material is near at hand for his use. There is then that depth of feeling, mournful, reflective, and yet hopeful and trustful, apart from which poetry can win for itself no higher esteem than what we bestow upon other decorative arts, which minister to the demands of luxurious *sloth*. There is, moreover, as we might say, underlying this poem, from the first line to the last, the substance of philosophic thought, apart from which, expressed or understood, poetry is frivolous, and is not in harmony with the seriousness of human life; this Psalm is of a sort which Plato would have written, or Sophocles, if only the one or the other of these minds had possessed a heaven-descended theology. *Isaac Taylor.*

1. In the first place, this splendid thought of the Divine eternity is made to touch the shifting and inconstant character of our earthly state, by the single word "dwelling-place." "Lord, a *home* hast Thou been to us, in generation and generation." V.—**Our dwelling-place**; or, "a place of refuge for us." The word, which occurs Deut. 33 : 27, would have a peculiar force of meaning for the Israelites in the wilderness; for Israel was without a country and without a *home*, finding here and there only a brief resting-place beside the well and under the palms of the desert. And Israel was without a *refuge*, exposed to enemies and a thousand perils. P.

"Our dwelling-place," our home (so the Hebrew) or place of *rest*. Ranging this houseless desert; ploughing these trackless sands; clambering these stony hills; threading these treeless valleys, with never a place of rest anywhere to the soles of our weary feet—such is our life; and it is only when our eye rests on the pillar of Thy glory standing above our sacred tent that we get the first idea of a *home*. In a wilderness, if God dwells in it, there may be a *home*, but it must be in God only. So it was with our fathers, the patriarchs, in their wanderings. Their God was their dwelling-place through all their generations. Apart from God there was no sense of *home* in their souls. C.

How far back into the past may the patriarchs have been looking when he spake these words? The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God is the Rock, His work perfect, all His ways judgment" (Deut. 33 : 4). But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said,

"*Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.*" He was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling-place of those that trust in Him from generation to generation. And to Him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amid the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is my God. *Tholuck.*—This exordium breathes life and pertains to a certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal life, since he calls God our place of refuge, to whom fleeing we may be in safety. For if God is our dwelling-place, and God is life, and we dwellers in Him, it necessarily follows that we are in life, and shall live forever. For who will call God the dwelling-place of the dead? Who shall regard Him as a sepulchre? He is life; and therefore they also live to whom He is a dwelling-place. *Luther.*

In this verse he is the spokesman and representative of all that is good and great in the past annals of mankind. He is speaking for the living; he is speaking also for the dead. The spiritual experience which these words represent is continually deeper and wider; and they are repeated at this moment by more souls in heaven and earth than ever before, souls which have found in them the motto and the secret of life, whether in struggle or in victory. H. P. L. —In God there is scope for the widest excursions of the mind, the highest elevations of thought and feeling; in His favor and friendship there are unknown possibilities of bliss. "*He is the dwelling-place*" of all His people in all ages; there is room in Him for all. He who supplies all with natural good here below, fills, at the same time, all the heavenly beings with the eternal effluxes of His light, and love, and joy! He is an immense, and therefore an adequate good to all. *R. Hall.*

God did not make us for death, but for life. If He has appointed a tent for our sojourn, He has reared a building for our dwelling. Moses, in that old Psalm, voices the truth. There is

nothing eternal but God. There is no warrant of man's eternity but God. There is no eternal home for man but in God. The old lawgiver looked forth from the tent where a generation was dying out in the wilderness ; looked away from the purple mountains, the most impressive symbol of stability which the earth furnishes ; looked away into what would have been vacancy to many another eye, and saw the eternal home there. . . . Thought has tended too much to the violent separation of the mortal life from the eternal life ; has tended to set them in contrast and opposition instead of in harmony ; has tended to regard them as representing different economies, instead of as being included in one and the same economy. We draw the line sharply between life and death ; and yet many a scientist will tell you that death is the beginning of life ; and Christ and Paul (2 Cor. 5 : 1) tell you that in unmistakable terms. And what we want clearly to apprehend with reference to this mortal, transitory tent-life of ours, is that it has a definite relation to the permanent spiritual life of the future ; that it serves a purpose of preparation and development toward that life ; that it furnishes a basis, a soil in which the seeds of the spiritual life are sown ; and that, therefore, instead of being despised and neglected because it is temporary and destined to dissolution, it is to be cherished and cultivated as the real and effective ministrant of the eternal life. "He that wrought us for this very thing is God." If God made us merely to die, and if death is the end, why, then, life has very little significance. If He made us to live forever, and if our life here fits into that life beyond, and prepares us for it, then life is not only significant, but gets its chief significance from that other thing for which God hath wrought us, *the building of God eternal in the heavens.* V.

2. From everlasting. Would you gather some idea of the eternity past of God's existence ? Go to the astronomer, and bid him lead you with him in one of his walks through space ; and, as he sweeps outward from object to object, from universe to universe, remember that the light from those filmy stains on the deep pure blue of heaven, now falling on your eye, has been traversing space for *a million of years.* O. M. Mitchell.—The earth, from her deep foundations, unites with the celestial orbs that roll through boundless space to declare the glory and show forth the praise of their common Author and Preserver ; and the voice of natural religion accords harmoniously with the testimonies of revelation, in ascribing the origin

of the universe to the will of one eternal and dominant intelligence, the Almighty Lord and supreme First Cause of all things that subsist ; *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, God from everlasting and without end.* Buckland.

Moses was surrounded by the unchanging mountains, and before him was the Land of Promise, to which he was leading the people ; and so there came to him the thought of the everlasting God, whose covenant of mercy is as unchangeable as the mountains. The personal and absolute existence of Jehovah, His perpetual providence over the world, and His eternal power and glory in the creation, are here asserted as strongly as in the first chapter of Genesis. This thought of God's eternity, while it inspires awe and humility, is the true ground of confidence and hope. We can trust in the Word and the grace of the unchanging Jehovah. He can give permanence to our feeble aims, and hopes of good ; and, if we apply our hearts to His ways, we shall find in Him the life everlasting. J. P. T.

3. Thou turnest man even to dust, and sayest, Return, sons of Man (or, Adam)! The evident allusion to Gen. 3 : 19, which is also found in Job. 10 : 9 ; 34 : 15, and reappears in Psalm 104 : 29, may serve to determine the meaning of the word translated *dust* in the first clause, but which is properly an adjective signifying *crushed*, broken to pieces, ground to powder, and is figuratively applied, in Psalm 34 : 18, to brokenness of heart. The shortness and fragility of human life is thus brought into the strongest contrast with the eternity of God. A.—*Return* is put here as a second fiat of the Almighty ; the first (ideally) summoning man forth from dust into organized body instinct with life ; the second, remanding him back again : Return to your primeval dust, ye sons of men ! It is in point here to recall the words of the Lord to Adam, then representing the race : "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." C.

Ye children. Two of the greatest lessons which Christ came to teach us were the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Look at man in himself, look at man as he makes himself by yielding to and aiding in the fraud and malice of the devil, and hardly any language can be too bitter to describe his baseness and his degradation. But look at man in the light of revelation ; look at him under the triple, overarching rainbow of faith, hope, and love ; look at him ransomed and ennobled into

filial relationship with God, and you will see at once where men have learned their high faith in their own being and the dignity of God's image upon them, and who it is that has taught them to speak in such noble accents about themselves. *Farrar.*

4. Even the patriarchal measure, which so often approximated to a thousand years, was in God's sight like a single day in man's, or rather like a mere subdivision of it, a third part of the night, which was divided by the ancient Hebrews into three watches. That this division was as old as Moses may be seen from Ex. 14 : 24. *When it is past, or passing.* It might also be translated, *for it passes, i.e.,* no less hastily and swiftly. This verse is quoted and amplified, but without any change of meaning (2 Pet. 3 : 8). *A.*

A watch in the night. The night was anciently divided into three, later into four watches. There is a climax ; for the past day, short as it seems, was, while it was passing, capable of measurement ; it had its hours and its minutes, its thoughts and its acts, and its memories. But the night-watch "is for us as though it were not ; we sleep through the watch of the night, living, but observing nothing." "In those words, 'a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday,' etc., the Psalmist has thrown a light upon the nature of God such as a volume of reasoning could not have kindled. With God there are no measures of time. With us time is the name we give to the duration of a certain succession of thoughts and efforts, each of which for a moment held full possession of us." *P.*—"This present time," especially as restricted to the life of individuals, when compared with endless duration, resembles an atom compared with the universe ! With the eternal God the most distant periods of time coalesce ; they meet in the same point, the creation and the last judgment, the beginning and the end of time, succeed to each other as the morning succeeds to the night, while the whole intervening lapse of duration passes as merely a watch in the night ! *R. Hall.*

5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood. Journeying oft amid mountains penetrated by deep and narrow valleys, Moses knew what a mountain torrent was in those pent-up defiles, a boiling, roaring flood, filling a valley sometimes to the depth of four hundred feet, carrying down huge boulders of rock as though they were so many pebbles, and sweeping whole families to destruction. Remember that a single thunder-storm, with a heavy shower of rain, falling on the naked

granite mountains, is sufficient to convert a dry and level valley into a roaring river in a few short hours, and you have some faint idea of the intensity with which the swiftness of man's passage from time to eternity appealed to the mind of Moses. *V.*

They are as a sleep. The comparison of human life to a sleep or dream is common in all languages. The morning is mentioned as the time of waking, the time when we are most impressed with the unsubstantial nature of our dreams. *A.*—Sleep is but short, and the sweeter it is the shorter it seems to be. And as it is but short of itself, though it should last the full swing of nature, so the soundest sleep is easily broken, and a number of means and occasions there be to interrupt and break it off. And is it not so with the life of man ? Is not the longest life short ? Is it not the shorter, the sweeter and fuller of contents it is ? And is it not easily taken away ? Are there not many means to bring us unto our end ? even as many as there are to waken us out of sleep. *W. Bradshaw.*

As grass that springs in the morning. For all the days that are past of our life, death hath them rather than we, and they are already in its possession ; when we look back on them, they appear but as a shadow or dream, and if they be so to us, how much more short are they in the sight of God ? So says David, When I look on Thee and Thy eternity, *mine age is as nothing before Thee ;* what is our life, being compared to God, before whom *a thousand years are but as one day,* and less, like yesterday, when it is past, and that is but a thought ! The whole duration of the world is but a point in respect of eternity ; and how small a point is the life of man, even in comparison with that ! *Leighton.*

6. Moses had seen the whole generation that came with him out of Egypt perish in the wilderness. In looking back over the forty years of the wandering, they seemed as a dream. A nation had vanished like the grass that springs up along the scanty water-courses of the desert, and withers beneath the scorching sun. It was as if a swift torrent from the gorges of the mountains had flooded their encampment and carried them away. Such is the littleness, the brevity of human life, when measured by itself ; and such has been the ceaseless ongoing of the tide of destruction since first death entered the world by sin. Through all the bustle and enterprise, the gayety, and ambition of the world, is still heard the sad refrain, "Return to dust, ye children of men." *J. P. T.*—The sense of the nothingness of life is much deep-

ened when we contrast it with the capabilities of us who live it. Our earthly life gives promise of what it does not accomplish. It promises immortality, yet it is mortal; it contains life in death and eternity in time, and it attracts us by beginnings which faith alone brings to an end. *Newman.*

7-12. Such is the striking and significant contrast with which this ancient Psalm opens. On one hand, the eternal years of God; on the other, man, who is a dream, a night-watch, a fading flower. But the author is not a mere poet; he does not waste time in sentimental reflections upon life's brevity as compared with God's eternity, but proceeds to give the reasons for human frailty. *Chambers.*

7. *For*; explanatory, not argumentative. The reason of all this transitoriness is to be found in Israel's sin, which has provoked God's heavy displeasure against His people. The use of the first person and the past tenses shows that the writer is dealing with the facts of his own history and that of his people. *P.*

8. *Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret (sins) in the light of Thy countenance.* As man's mortality is the effect of God's wrath, so this wrath itself is the effect of sin. And this sin becomes the cause of death. The verse before us represents God in the act of shortening man's life, and gives the necessary explanation of what might otherwise have seemed at variance with His infinite benevolence. The Bible, as an eminent interpreter has well said, throws the blame of death entirely on man himself. When God slays man, He puts his sins before him, looks directly at them; not only those which are notorious, but those which are concealed from every eye but that of omniscience. The precise sense seems to be that God holds our sins to the light of His own countenance, and therefore cannot fail to see them. *A.*—The light of God's countenance is everywhere else spoken of as a light of love and approbation. Here it is a revealing light. The "light" or rather "sun" of God's countenance shines down into the dark abysses of the human heart, bringing out its hidden evils into strong and painful relief. *P.*

God sees our iniquities. They are "before Him." When they are committed, they are committed before His face; not in His presence merely, but directly in His sight. He consequently sees them distinctly, clearly, thoroughly. None of them can escape Him, none deceive Him. This truth the Psalmist most forcibly expresses. He bids us look on our sins as arrayed "in the light of Jehovah's countenance." And who

can tell us what that light is? The sun which is shining in the heavens throws around us day by day a glorious splendor; it discovers to us more iniquity on the earth than we can sometimes bear the sight of without a pang; but what is the light of yonder sun compared with the brightness of the Almighty's face? It is utter darkness. And yet in the brightness of that face are all our sins committed, all seen. The follies of our childhood, the iniquities of our youth, the misdeeds of our riper years; the sins of our hands, the sins of our lips, the sins of our hearts; our sins in company, our sins alone; our sins in our business, our sins in our pleasures; our sins at home, our sins abroad; our light-heartedness and pride in our prosperity, and our impatience, and murmuring, and rebellion in our troubles; our stifled convictions, our forgotten resolutions, our broken vows; our contempt of the wrath of God, our abuse of His mercy; above all, the little value we have set on the great salvation of His dear Son—it is of all these, in all their multitude and all their enormity, of which Moses here speaks. He calls them ours. Not satisfied with laying them on our heads, he bids us look on them as altogether our own. *C. Bradley.*

9. *For all our days are gone in Thine anger; we spend our years like a thought.* The *all* in the first clause is emphatic. What he says is true of our whole life. *Are gone*, literally, *turned away*, as an act preparatory to departure. The word we translate *thought* is elsewhere applied to audible sound as the spontaneous expression of thought or feeling to one's self. *A.*—We are still losing and spending life as we enjoy it; yea, our very enjoying it is the spending it; yesterday's life is dead to-day, and so shall this day's life be to-morrow. *We spend our years*, says Moses, *as a tale*, or as a thought, so swift and vanishing is it. Each word helps a tale toward its end, and while it lasts it is generally vanity, and when it is done it vanishes as a sound in the air. *Leighton.*

As a tale that is told. As we listen to the attractive story of friend or stranger, with mind and heart so absorbed that the very consciousness of continued existence for moments or hours is utterly lost, so under the unbroken spell of swiftly succeeding events and experiences, days, months, years are unconsciously spent and gone. To him that meditates upon a life of forty, fifty, sixty years, how like a tale that is told are all that he has spent! How strangely, as by a force he could not resist, set on a path of life he has not planned, has he been hurried along through the shifting scenes of

childhood, youth and manhood ! *Startling*, indeed, piercing to the quick of the sensitive soul, is the realized thought of this pauseless, onward movement of time ! Alas ! *who does think upon, who has realized it ? As each day has risen out of and sunk again into eternity, who of us has heard its solemn questioning voices, one as the day has risen, asking, "What will you do with the work set before you of God ?" the other, as the day has departed, inquiring, "What have you done, toiled, and achieved for God and man, or idled, slept, and so wasted opportunities never to return ?"* B.

However long it may appear in looking forward, when counting the years of which it may consist, the longest life seems short in the retrospect ; except, indeed, in some cases, where there may have been great activity, many changes, and much sorrow. To our consciousness, time takes its measurement from what we do or endure. With the busy man time is quick in its passage, but protracted to memory, from the number of links which go to make up what can be recalled. To the indolent and inactive it is slow and wearisome, but seems as nothing when it is past, for there is nothing to be remembered. The hearing of a story is attended by a rapid and passing interest ; it leaves behind it a vague impression, beyond which comparatively but few incidents may stand out distinctly in the afterthought. The story ended ; and then came the sense of shortness, brevity, the rapid flight of the period employed by it, with something like a feeling of wonder and dissatisfaction at the discovery of this. Another thought in relation to those who live only for excitement. They are just like the men habitually devoted to listening to a story-teller. No sooner is one tale done, than they want another. They think of nothing but the impression of the moment. They want the pleasure repeated, though they know very well that they may have only to listen to an old story, or that even a new one will but feebly reproduce the pleasurable excitement which attended their entrance into the charmed circle. It is the same with those who live for enjoyment rather than work. They cry out for the repetition of that which has ceased to satisfy ; and they go on, trying to prolong or to vary excitements which they perfectly well know have come to be to them as "a thrice-told tale." For a final and more important thought. It is for each of us to remember that life is no fiction, no mere tale, though it may look like one. It is something inexpressibly serious, something terribly and grandly real. It is to be spent, subject to the action of those universal

and eternal laws under which God has placed us, and which, in the end, will have momentous issues, whether men now think so or not. By reason of sin, the whole aspect of things is broken and confused ; derangement and dislocation are everywhere ; yet, through the grace of God and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, our poor, weak, guilty nature can be so restored and purified, so raised and helped, that life, instead of being like a tale told by an itinerant story-teller, shall put on the appearance of a sublime epic, of which the substance and the song shall be alike Divine. We may so spend our threescore years and ten that, at the end of them, instead of feeling that they have passed like a poor story that comes to nothing, or stooping to take up the splenetic complaint of the remorseful and disappointed—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"—we may be able to adopt the noble and lofty language of one who was conscious that, by God's help, he had really lived to some purpose : "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I ran, not as uncertainly ; I fought, not as one that beateth the air. I am now ready to be offered. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." *T. Binney.*

Death comes as a *flood*, violently and suddenly ; we are as a *sleep* ; we are as *grass* ; our life is like a *dream* ; we spend our days as a *tale that is told*. All these similitudes Moses hath in this Psalm, as if he wanted words and examples to express the vanity, frailty, and shortness thereof. *Samuel Smith.*

10. This dark shadow extends over the whole of life, and not only its close. "All our days" bear the same stamp, and even when they stretch out into years, still they fly away "as a thought," a comparison used by Homer and Theognis, yet without the underlying thought of Moses that the flight is retributive. This conception is here expanded with great force and beauty. The poet exclaims as in amazement, The days of our years ! What are they, or what do they amount to ? Threescore and ten is the usual limit, but even when that is exceeded there is small room for glorying, for "their pride" (as the literal rendering is), that which causes us to be proud, health, strength, honor, riches, etc., all—all is mere toil and emptiness. *Chambers.*

The time of our life is threescore years and ten (saith Moses), or rack it to *fourscore*, though not one in every *fourscore* arrives to that account,

yet can we not be said to live so long ; for take out ten years for infancy and childhood, wherein we scarce remember what we did, or whether we lived or no ; and how short it is then ? Take out of the remainder a third part for sleep, wherein we lie senseless, and how short is it then ? Take out yet besides the time of our worldly care, wherein we seem both dead and buried in the affairs of the world, and how short is it then ? So short is that life which nature allows, and yet we sleep away part, and play away part, and the cares of the world have a great part, so that the true spiritual and Christian life hath little or nothing in the end.
Robert Wilkinson.

11. The entire sentiment of the verse is : Who has ever fully comprehended the power and the results of God's displeasure against sin, as we see them in the universal mortality of the race, and in all the pains and woes which fill this earthly life ? Who estimates this with such fear of God as the facts inspire ? C.—So far as one can see from the present arrangements of the world, it is God's way to withdraw for the most part from our view the sterner features of His character, while He puts forward and emphasizes everywhere His gracious and fruitful goodness. The mere power or strength of God is itself rather concealed than thrust upon us. It hides itself behind the order within which He is pleased to exert it. The extent to which God's strength might come to be at the service of His anger, and be used by Him to destroy, is still more closely veiled from us by the uniform beneficence of His creation. Only occasionally does nature suggest wrath. Her deliberate arrangements are all inspired by goodness. The experience which we have had of God in our own lives is to the same effect ; our bitter days we count upon our fingers, our happier ones by years. Judgment is God's strange work ; but His tender mercies are over all His works. Seeing that God intends His latent wrath to remain as yet concealed from us and hath Himself been at pains to conceal it, by what means shall we search it out ? The writer of this Psalm puts into our hand a standard of comparison which, though insufficient, is at least approximative. The wrath of God, he says, is "according to His fear ;" to His fearfulness, that is, or His fitness for inspiring in the bosoms of men an awful and sacred dread. Whatever suggests to our minds the enormous strength of God as against our weakness suggests how terrific His wrath may be if He will. But in order to estimate the capacity of wrath in the Almighty we need to know more than His

strength, more than His material terribleness. One event in history expresses to the full the moral terribleness of God. The Passion of Jesus Christ is the crown of all terrible things, and the supreme measure not only of God's mercy, but quite as really of God's severity. According to His fearfulness, so is His wrath. *Dykes.*

12. The eternal being of God is used to convict us of *delusion*. We measure life by false standards. The Psalm brings us back to the true rule of measurement. "A thousand years, in Thy sight, are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Teach us to number our days by Thy standard, that we may be wise." That old delusion, older than Moses, is woven into man's very nature, and is fed and flattered with every gilded cheat that his fancy can devise ; the delusion which leads him to think seventy years a long time. We need Moses to call to us out of the desert, and tell us that even the patriarchs' lives of centuries are represented to God's eye by a vanished yesterday, or a brief night-watch. What life is long, measured by an eternal standard ? Well said Bengel, "As to a rich man, a thousand pounds are as a penny, so to God, a thousand years are as a day." Evidently we are poor reckoners when life is a factor of the problem. We need eternal wisdom to teach us to number our days, so as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. V.

There is nothing in eternity but what springs out of time ; all the good which eternity has in store and all the evil, all the promises and all the threatenings of God in Scripture, all will be realized in consequence of and in proportion to the improvement or abuse of the present time of our probation. The less there remains of this precious article, the more valuable it should appear ; the narrower becomes the isthmus that separates us from eternity, the more time seems to enlarge itself in moral magnitude ; in a word, to squander time is to squander all. *R. Hall.*—There is no saying shocks me so much as that which I hear very often, that a man does not know how to pass his time. It would have been but ill spoken by Methuselah, in the nine hundred and sixty-ninth year of his life. *Cowley.*—The hours of a wise man are lengthened by his ideas, as those of a fool are by his passions. The time of the one is long, because he does not know what to do with it ; so is that of the other, because he distinguishes every moment of it with useful or amusing thoughts ; or, in other words, because the one is always wishing it away, and the other always enjoying it. *Addison.*

Every day is a little life ; and our whole life is but a day repeated. And hence it is that Jacob numbers his life by days, and Moses desires to be taught this point of holy arithmetic, "to number not his *years*, but his *days*, and these so as to apply his heart unto wisdom."

Anon.—Of all arithmetical rules, this is the hardest, to *number our days*. Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable, and therefore do never begin to number them. We can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own, therefore this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days. *Tymme.*—Your greatest responsibility is yourself. The gravest charge you have to keep is the charge of your own soul. Life weaves us into the fabric of society. We are knitted and knotted with other lives. But death unthreads us from our connections. In the last day you will be responsible for yourself. Search, then, and see how you stand. *W. H. Murray.*

It is evident that the great thing wanted to make men provide for eternity is the practical persuasion that they have but a short time to live. They will not apply their hearts unto wisdom until they are brought to the numbering of their days. The most surprising thing in the text is, that it should be in the form of a prayer. It is necessary that God should interfere to make men number their days. What ! is there not enough to make us feel our frailty ? Are there not lessons enough of that frailty without any teaching from above ? *Melville.*—To number our days is to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct, and in which it shall at last be absorbed. *T. Dale.*—The depth of the individual life must be counted, as well as its length, its intensity as well as its duration, ere we can come to any real appreciation of its true value. The whole shallow life of the unwise or the sensual does not count for as much as a single day in a life filled with high thinking and pure achievement. The measurement by quality is therefore more important in this matter of human life than the measurement by quantity. Intensity, not attenuation, is the true measure of being. It is with God to decide how

many suns shall rise upon us, how many wanings of the moon we shall see. It is left to ourselves to decide whether we shall live while we live, and whether our days shall be those which the Lord lengthens, or our years those which His wrath shortens. We can choose that course in which the great end of life is attained, or that other course which ends in the dreariness and emptiness of dead souls. For time is not the true measure of life ; but that life is a long life which attains life's great end ; which has been made rich with pure thoughts, lofty purposes, worthy enthusiasms ; and which has been filled with the deeds of Christ. S. S. T.

The Bible wastes no time in sentimental condolence over the brevity of life and the swift coming of death. It is a fact to be dealt with, and not merely bemoaned. The Bible speaks to man as to one that must be saved. "Thou art a sinner, O man ! Thou art swept away like a flood because of sin. Thou art frightened because death draws nigh. Thou mayest well be frightened, but not at death. That which is behind death, that which propels it so swiftly and resistlessly is more terrible than death, the wrath of a holy God against sin." God has no easy good-nature or false tenderness which lead Him to conceal the terrors of sin. It is the Comforter who convinces of sin and of judgment. His face beams with tenderness upon man, His voice calls him to find his home and his rest in the eternal God ; but the very brightness of His face, which lights up the way to eternal rest, brings out with terrible distinctness the outlines of human iniquity, and the secret sins which lurk in the deepest heart. True it is that the Bible is an evangel of love and pardon and compassion ; true that God knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust ; true that, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him ;" but also true that the Bible, from beginning to end, blazes like Sinai with God's hatred of sin, resounds with warnings of man's danger from sin, and sets forth as in letters of fire that man is responsible for sin, and liable to its penalties ; true that history and prophecy and Psalm and Gospel and epistle are grouped round one definite purpose, to save him from the power, dominion, and consequences of sin. In view of these terrible facts, and of men's persistent blindness to the power of God's anger then as now, is it strange that Moses prayed, is there not good cause for us to pray, "Teach us to number our days" ? Teach us how short our life is ; teach us the true meaning of its brevity, as a punishment and not as an unhappy accident ; teach us how we may use

its brief hours to escape the consequences of God's wrath ; teach us to number our days, until, as Thy humble pupils, we bring a heavenly wisdom to bear upon the conduct of our lives. V.

With a visible world so enthralling, so bewildering, so deceiving ; with an invisible world so near, so secret, so capable of being wholly unnoticed and forgotten, how thoughtfully should Christians step, as from year to year their remaining time of trial grows shorter, their end nearer, their judgment surer ! How should they learn to feel *prayer*, their constant, their blessed, their certain, their only safety ! How should they link their private devotions with their momentary thoughts and words of supplication through their day ; their momentary words of supplication with the ever-present *faith*, which regulates every little act and movement of their hearts to the honor and devotion of God ! For die we sooner or later, live we smoother or rougher lives on earth, visitations of God in Christ come to us all in great abundance ; and happy only are they whom He findeth watching, watching in prayer, that they may know and not misuse the times of their visitation. *G. Moberly*.—Oh, that I could inscribe upon your souls the legend round the clock : "They pass away, but they are laid to our account !" Count up the many days already gone, the few that still remain. Thank God if you have found the only true reply to the great question, "What is life ?" and urge this in your turn on other men. "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation ;" but above all, like Moses, "continue instant in prayer." A short time longer and then your death, too, shall confirm the truth of Moses' view of life ; and one who has observed your faith and your departure from this world will point aloft as he declares, "His true life has begun !" *Van O.*

13-17. The prayer which follows springs from the deep source of the preceding meditation. God is everlasting, man transitory and sinful. Man does not consider his sin aright, even when God lays His hand upon him. He needs Divine instruction that he may take to heart the lesson both of his sinfulness and his transitoriness. But Moses does not forget that, in spite of all, God has been and still is the home of His people. He is a compassionate God, as well as a God that punisheth transgression. And therefore he asks not only that he and his people may learn the lesson of Divine wisdom, but that the God who had chastened them would visit them with His loving-kindness, that the

night of sorrow may flee away, and the morning of gladness dawn. God's love, God's personal manifestation of Himself, His blessing descending upon them as they enter upon their new life in the promised inheritance—for this, and not for anything less, he prays. P.

The last five verses bring us back to the starting-point of the Psalm. Whither shall a sinful, short-lived man flee but to a holy and eternal God ? Thither turns the prayer of these last five verses, and turns with hope and confidence. Man is the subject of God's wrath, but there is mercy with Him to satisfy him who flees from the wrath to come. Man is a pilgrim and a stranger, with no continuing city, but there is gladness and rejoicing in God for all his brief days. Man's beauty consumes as the moth, but "the beauty of the Lord our God" shall be upon him, and that beauty is immortal, untouched by time and change. Man's work is fragmentary, his plans often disconcerted, his grandest enterprises nipped in the bud by death, but God's touch upon human work imparts to it the fixedness of eternity ; and if He establish the work of our hands, it shall abide, though the world pass away and the lust thereof. He will make good the sufferings of sin by the joys of holiness. Glory, beauty, establishment. A strange ending of this wail from the desert ; and yet not strange in the Gospel light in which we read it to-day. It is only the prophecy of the saved man's triumph over mortality and sin and death ; of the victim of the down-sweeping flood snatched from its fury, and landed safely in the eternal dwelling-place in "the everlasting arms ;" of the mown grass garnered, of the sleeper awaking, satisfied, in God's likeness. It is the foreshadowing of that blessed story of the wandering son brought home at last, and seated at the Father's table, to go no more out forever. V.

15. The time of our pilgrimage upon earth is a time of sorrow ; these are "the days wherein God afflicted us ; these the years wherein we see evil ;" but he will hereafter "make us glad according to them ;" in proportion to our sufferings, if rightly we bear those sufferings, will be our reward ; nay, "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Then shall our joy be increased, and receive an additional relish, from the remembrance of our former sorrow ; then shall we bless the days and the years which exercised our faith and perfected our patience ; and then shall we bless God, who chastised us for a season, that He might save us forever. *Bishop Horne*.

We have to serve and help our neighbors, we who ourselves stand in such bitter need of help ! We have to contend with the spiritual wickednesses which are in them, we who are so often overcome ! Everywhere around us there is the same heavy task, the same unremitting and deadly conflict, which we find within. And how can we achieve or contribute to that task save by manifold and exhausting labors ? how be always in the thick of that conflict without taking as well as giving many wounds ? If there were no interior contest, no constant toil at home, the sheer force of sympathy with our neighbors is at times enough to break our hearts, if at least we have our Master's spirit of love and pity. Think how many sorrows there are in the world, what deep and wide miseries, what innumerable and incurable evils ! Nay, think how many even in our own narrow circles are at this very moment weeping bitter tears of regret, anguish, despair ; how many faint in languor and pain ; how many, and these the most pitiable of all, eat and drink, and laugh and swear, while the very soul is dying out of them, oppressed and strangled by the lusts of the flesh. If we are Christian in spirit as well as in name, if we have any share of our Master's purity, and tenderness, and grace, all these miseries and evils are as thorns in our crown. We cannot, we dare not, be indifferent to them. At times they tear and sting us well-nigh into despair, till, like Moses and Paul, we could wish ourselves blotted from the book of life, if only these poor souls might be healed and saved. It is through such pains and toils as these that we grow strong in spirit.

Christ's crown of thorns broke into flower long ago ; its sweet healing odors float through the heavenly temple, and are wafted over the earth by every wind that blows. Let us but be patient, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, always showing a good courage in the wars of the Lord ; and in due time our crowns, of which we should hardly be conscious now but for the thorns, will also blossom into flower, and will make us glad according to the days wherein they have afflicted us. *Cox.*

16. The prayer of the Psalmist is the prayer of one who looks forward, of one who would fain build what will be continued by them that come after. "Show Thy servants Thy work, and their children Thy glory." Amid all that is fleeting and perishable, make us to know what *Thou* doest ; and for our children we can ask no richer gift. The work of God is the glory of God. Once let us believe in our hearts that God *is* working in the world, and then it becomes an

axiom that *we*, too, in our humble measure, have a work to do, a work lofty and ennobling because it is done for Him and with Him, because we are in truth admitted to very co-operation with God. *H. M. Butler.*

17. *And let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us, and the work of our hands establish upon us, and the work of our hands, establish Thou it.* While the glory of Jehovah is expected to be fully revealed only in His dealings with the next generation, He is still besought to grant their fathers the experimental knowledge of His *beauty*, loveliness, or all that renders Him an object of affection. The work of our hands is a favorite Mosaic phrase for all that we do or undertake, all our affairs and interests. To establish or confirm it is to prosper and succeed it, to bring it to a favorable issue. **A.**—The closing verse of the Psalm comprehends both the Divine and the human side of the work given to God's people. First, the Psalmist prays for the beauty of Jehovah ; that is, all that which renders Him an object of affection, His wondrous graciousness, to be revealed to them in the way of experience. But this, so far from superseding rather implies their own activity. Hence the next petition mentions "the work of our hands," a favorite Mosaic phrase for all that we do or undertake, which God is requested to establish ; *i.e.*, to confirm and bring to a favorable issue. *Chambers.*

They were content to live and to die as pilgrims, provided only they could feel that in His sterner dealings with them God was, however slowly, preparing the way for that display of glorious blessedness which should be the lot of their descendants. In a similar spirit they ask God to establish the work of their hands, though they reckoned not that they should behold its results. Their comfort in sowing was the belief that their children would reap. *Thrupp.*

The beauty of the Lord our God.

What an eye and ear these Psalmists had for beauty ! But in how much truer a light than either the meagre realism of our day or the pagan worship of beauty for its own sake ! Their holy art could not content itself with the forms and pictures about them ; they must come into communion with the Divine Artist, and see Him at His work. It is the presence of the Good Shepherd which makes the fields bright. It is the Lord of glory who gives the storm its voice of majesty. It is of Him that the days speak, and the nights show starry knowledge. It is He who curiously wrought our bodies and fashioneth our hearts. And before the work of our

hands can be established, the beauty of the Lord our God must be upon it. *F. N. Zabriskie.*

What is the beauty of God? The excellence of His character. The meaning of all beauty is to image the holiness and excellence of God. The perception of beauty has been given us not, as some suppose, for enjoyment merely, but to bind us to the infinite, to make it more difficult for man to lose himself in time and sense, and to woo him to a heavenly perfection. The beauty of God is His love, mercy, patience, faithfulness. The justice of God, too, which may well appear to sinful man only terrible, has truly a grand beauty. Viewed from a higher point, the terrible in God is the beautiful, for it is seen to be a form of love. Once in the history of this sinful world infinite beauty appeared. Once God contracted Himself into the limits of our nature and walked the earth. Divine loveliness spoke and acted among us, shone through the eyes and lived in the actions and sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a perception of the beauty of God, a delight in it, a desire after it, which distinguish the spiritual man from others. They may feel that God is great and right; he feels that God is beautiful. A sense of the Divine beauty gives an elevation to all life, and clothes it with a certain infinite halo of gladness. Nothing can greatly afflict a soul that has a steady vision of the Divine beauty. Such a soul rises freely above temptation, heaven has entered into it, and it finds it easy to keep the road to heaven. *J. Leckie.*

Heart-purity is the glory of all loveliness. The heart makes the life. The inner fashions the outer. So, above all things, be pure-hearted. That you may be pure-hearted, let Christ more and more into your life, that He may fill all your soul, and that His Spirit may permeate all your being. That the beauty of the Lord may be upon you, that the winning charm of God's loveliness may shine in your features, you must first have the beauty of Christ within you. The transfiguration must come from within. Only a holy, beautiful heart can make a holy, beautiful character. *J. R. M.* — In the present state, the least part of a saint's worth is visible. As the earth is fruitful in plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metal and the veins of marble hidden in its bosom, true grace appears in sensible actions, *but its glory is within.* The sincerity of aims, the purity of affection, the impresses of the Spirit on the heart, the interior beauties of holiness, are only seen by God. *Salter.*

There is spiritual light, so beauty-inspiring that the plainest face within which it is born is

illumined with singular loveliness, which wins its way into many a heart. Who of us has not marvelled at an unexpected light in what we had always thought an uninteresting face? Who has not beheld a light Divine irradiate the human countenance, giving joy, and prophesying perfection, where we had least thought to find beauty? May we not take these facts as emblems, albeit faint and imperfect, of what the "*Beauty of the Lord*" does for us and our work? You know what the natural light can do for material objects; you know what mental and moral light can work for human faces; rise from these, and know what spiritual light, Divine light, can do for immortal beings and immortal works. *Jessie Coombs.* — God is glorified and His work advances when His Church is beautiful. "*The beauty of the Lord*" is the beauty of holiness, that beauty which in the Lord Jesus Himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is toward this that all among us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of His Kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavors. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. *Hamilton.*

If the common mind has awakened to the perception of the tender, the beautiful and sublime in the dew-drops and flowers, in the strength of the everlasting hills, in the calm majesty of the moon walking in brightness; to the sense of the infinite in the great and wide sea and the depths of the open heaven, it owes much of the feeling, and even of the expression, to the great Book which has unclosed the spirit's eye. But far beyond these are the forms of the moral and spiritual with which the Bible is so filled, and which it is its supreme aim to present to men, what it terms emphatically "*the beauty of the Lord,*" the pure and merciful, the heroic and self-devoted, singly and in groups, flaming up into great deeds, or flowing on in the calm current of a life; and among these, those transformations the most wonderful, from the impure to the holy, from the meanest human mould to the loftiest shapes of magnanimity and self-devotion. Does any book, or do all other books together, present such scenes of moral grandeur and tenderness with such everlasting freshness in them? *Ker.*

How will it seem in the heavenly world, when the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us, when every form and every face is angelic ; nay, more than this, like Christ's, for "we shall be like Him ;" when our dwelling-place is the metropolis of suns and stars, where the God of creation has lavished the exceeding riches of His power and skill ; "where angels walk and seraphs are the warders ;" where we shall have music, and society, and friendships, and homes, and friends restored to each other ; and the walls, and foundations, and gates, and pavements of our place of habitation shall be of prodigal affluence, but forgotten by us in the incomparable joys of the heart and mind ?
N. Adams.

The work of our hands. Another expression which runs all through Deuteronomy. The order deserves notice. *God's* work is first to appear, His majesty to be revealed ; then *man's* work, which is God's work carried out by human instruments, may look for His blessing. Referring to the use of this Psalm in the burial of the dead, Mr. Housman observes : "It is remarkable how not only this but the thirty-ninth Psalm, as well as 1 Cor. 15, all close with the same thought—*work* ; as though the one great use of the shortness of life and the coming on of death were to stir us up to use the very utmost of the time that is left." P.—Correct sad thoughts by the thought of the permanence of work. "Prosper Thou the *work* of our hands." Feelings pass, thoughts and imaginations pass ; dreams pass ; work remains. Through eternity, what you have done, that you are. So, then, amid the solemn lessons taught to the giddy traveller as he journeys on by a nature hastening with gigantic footsteps down to a winter grave, and by the solemn tolling of the bell of time, which tells us that another, and another, and another is gone before us, we will learn, not the lesson of the sensualist—enjoy while you can ; not that of the feeble sentimentalist—mourn, for nothing lasts ; but that of the Christian—work cheerfully. F. W. R.

Wise work is briefly work with God ; foolish work is work against God. And work makes a difference, whether you serve Him who has on vesture written, "King of kings," whose service is perfect freedom, or him on whose vesture is written, "Slave of slaves," whose service is perfect slavery. *Ruskin.*—Moses prays for a share in the work and glory and beauty of God. This is the deepest prayer of every true man and woman. We long to leave something behind us which shall last, some influence of good which shall be transmitted through our

children, some impress of character or action which shall endure and perpetuate itself. There is only one way in which we can do this, only one way in which our lives can receive any lasting beauty and dignity ; and that is by being taken up into the great plan of God. Then our work is established, because it becomes part of His work. *H. Van Dyke.*—The different sides of our nature, like the different periods of our life, should be bound each to each by natural piety. Work should be prayerful, and prayer true work ; all life a Psalm, and praise the breath of life, for the Christian's life is love, and love is the only sufficient source of happiness. *Grant.*

Christian life consists of *work sustained by worship*. Mary's warm heart must be joined to Martha's busy hand. Christian work is rooted to worship, as the strong, wide-reaching branches of the tree above are fed by the great roots below. Christian toil must depend on the secret roots of prayer. Worship simplifies work, unifies work, skims work of its fuss and fret. It calms the spirit, makes us uncomplaining, and carries everything in the right spirit to the Master. *E. Judson.*—It is not by enthroning religion on Sunday in the sanctuary, but it is by bringing religion into the counting-house, the exchange, and the market, that we really honor her. It is not by studied service, by early matins, by twilight vespers, by chimes of holy bells that summon us three times a day to come to worship, that we do homage to Christ. It is a grand mistake in the world to think that you can only be religious when engaged in religious work. That is not true. You may be religious when you are building, or ploughing, or sowing, or reaping. If anything were to go wrong, or any temptation urged to do wrong, you would fall back upon the grand governing motive, "Serve the Lord Christ ;" but for the time you are engaged wholly in the work ; and it is not irreligious to do it with all your might, when the motive for which you do it and the end to which you do it is a Divine one. It is not true that doing religious work is necessarily being religious. It is not the work that makes the workman holy, but it is the workman's heart that consecrates the toil, and makes all he does to be serving the Lord Christ. To be truly religious is to bring the motives, the hopes, the precepts, the spirit of religion into all our walks and ways in the world, till our whole life becomes religious. *Cumming.*—Holiness was meant for every-day use. It is home-made and home-worn. Its exercise hardens the bone, and strengthens the muscle in the body of character,

Holiness is religion shining. It is the candle lighted, and not hid under a bushel, but lighting the house. It is religious principle put into motion. It is the love of God sent forth into circulation on the feet and with the hands of love to man. It is faith gone to work. It is charity coined into actions, and devotion breathing benedictions on human suffering, while it goes up in intercessions to the Father of all piety. F. D. H.

While, on the one hand, there is no more certain means of enjoying God than of humbly seeking to walk in the ways of His commandments, on the other hand, there is nothing more evanescent in its nature than the emotion of religious joy, faith, or the like, unless it be turned into a spring of action for God. Such emotions, like photographs, vanish from the heart unless they be fixed. Work for God is the way to fix them. Joy in God is the strength of work for God, but work for God is the perpetuation of joy in God. A. M.—There is a conscious gladness in doing the work of God on earth, in co-operating with Him, in our small measure, in our limited circle, yet with a true consecration of the spirit to Him, which He accepts and blesses, and the result of which He secures and furthers by His providence and the energy of His Spirit. So it is that the grandest workers have been the happiest Christians. Luther, how he sings in his conversations and in his letters! In his sermons he was sometimes sad undoubtedly, looking at the apparent triumph of evil and of errors against the truth, but in himself rejoicing and triumphant because he felt himself co-worker with God, even as did Paul beforetime. So with all those who, by great endeavor and by long-continued endurance, not merely by generosity of gift, but by self-sacrifice in effort, have wrought for God. According to their pains has been the blessedness that followed; according to the heroic character of their work has been the rich and royal character of their reward. And it has come from this; not from the sense of blessing future ages merely, though that has come to them oftentimes; not from the sense of exerting grand powers of will merely, but from the sense of being in co-operation with the Almighty Himself. The soul has felt itself crowned by this Divine permission to labor for a Divine end; has felt itself exalted and inspired by the secret impulse given it from above, pushing it into grand and Divine enterprise. R. S. S.

The ninetieth Psalm utters the experience of one of the grandest, but at the same time sad-

dest and most burdened men who has ever trodden the pathways of our world. There is a deeper solemnity in it, and a stronger sense of the awfulness of life and of God, than in the Psalms of David. It is a song of the desert; it breathes its atmosphere; it is penetrated with its awe—an awe which was nursed among the solemn, sterile silences, as the lonely leader watched the sunset glow, or the wheelings of the troops of stars, over the waste. But his hope lies deeper than his despondency. The dominant note in the Psalm is hope, and it ends on the ruling tone. "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it." And it is our pilgrim Psalm. Like him in the wilderness we spend what, but for faith, would be our weary days. In its hot, dusty arena we march under command, and we work under compulsion, as we gather its scant, uncertain supplies; and we are destined thus to work, to march, to be fed, until we drop, and its sods grow green over our graves. Yet, God-led like them, we journey; an angel in the midst, a fiery pillar in front, and with the hills of our Canaan gleaming in the distance, touched by the light of the celestial sun. J. B. Brown.

There is a mingled blessedness and awfulness in our life. To live here at all as a human being, to possess or rather to be the centre of self-reflecting thought and of self-determining will, a centre of life which under some conditions will be perpetuated indefinitely—this, when we think of it steadily and in good earnest, is, next to the spiritual sight of God Himself, the most solemn, the most chastening, the most stimulating consideration that can open upon us. Let us make much of it, in the interests both of the present and the future, for the sake of God and truth and humanity, as well as of our own lasting happiness. H. P. L.

Life is short, yet this short life is long enough to honor God, to be a source of blessing to others and for ourselves, to seek the one thing needful, which maintains its value throughout eternity. Life is uncertain; but just this uncertainty calls us to have always our loins girded, our lamps burning, and we ourselves as those who wait their Lord. Life is full of trouble; for the sinner it must be so, since he must wean his heart from much that he holds dear, but cannot keep. To the Christian it may be so; yet in the deepest pain he merely casts into the field his heart, a

seed for heaven. Reconciled with God in Christ, we are content with all that here menaces and casts us down. Yea, how can it harm us to reach the boundary line which Moses marked? We fly away, but, God be praised! we know the better land, and in our holiest hours would seek for nothing more. And this is certain, when we reach that place where we shall see God face to face, nothing would tempt us to return. Our Psalm is only for the wilderness; in Canaan our songs shall be of triumph. What are the seventy or eighty fleeting years (and few reach even that boundary; years spent on earth in toil and trouble, too) when we compare them with the glory of the sons of God, which then shall be revealed? Then, in the morning of eternity, He satisfies His people with the full enjoyment of His goodness; He makes them glad according to the days of evil they have seen on earth. Then all His work appears unto His servants'

eyes; and it is shown to heaven and earth that there was absolute necessity for even that weary warfare in this life, to fit them for the wearing of the everlasting crown. Then comes—what higher blessedness can faith conceive?—then comes the beauty of the Lord our God, in its entirety, on all who loved Him in sincerity; and the work of their hands, begun in weakness to His praise, is perfected in power. Once more He overwhelms them, but with streams of everlasting bliss; the brief—yea, and the longest—life of pain has now passed by, as if it were a watch by night; and God's eternity, God's blessedness, God's glory now are theirs, as far as creatures can receive. They mount up hence, always, like eagles, straight toward the sun. Christians! if the Psalm of life, even here, gives such encouragement to faith, what shall it be when, up in heaven, the song of all eternity ascends? *Van O.*

PSALM XCI.

- 1 HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in whom I trust.
- 3 For he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
And from the noisome pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover thee with his pinions,
And under his wings shalt thou take refuge:
His truth is a shield and a buckler.
- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
For the pestilence that walketh in darkness,
Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
- 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side,
And ten thousand at thy right hand;
But it shall not come nigh thee.
- 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold,

And see the reward of the wicked.

- 9 For thou, O LORD, art my refuge!
Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation;
- 10 There shall no evil befall thee,
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways.
- 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- 13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
The young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet.
- 14 Because he hath set his love upon me,
therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
- 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble:
I will deliver him, and honour him.
- 16 With long life will I satisfy him,
And shew him my salvation.

THIS Psalm, which in the Hebrew has no inscription, celebrates, with considerable variety and beauty of expression, God's loving and watchful care, and the perfect peace and secu-

city of those who make Him their refuge. "Can the providence of God," asks Herder, "be taught in a more trustful or more tender spirit? The language is the language of a father, growing ever more fatherly as it proceeds, till at last the Great Father Himself takes it up, and declares His truth and faithfulness." The variety of figures employed shows that the Psalmist is thinking of peril of every kind, coming from whatever source, and that he paints all dangers and fears vividly to the eye of his mind, in order to express the more joyfully his confidence that none of these things can move him, that over all he is more than conqueror. It is Paul's fervid exclamation, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" expressed in rich and varied poetry. The structure of the Psalm is in some respects peculiar. The writer speaks at one time of or from, at another to, himself; he is both subject and object; now he utters his own experience, and now he seeks to encourage himself with Divine promises; and the transitions are so abrupt that various attempts have been made to soften or explain them. Delitzsch thinks that the Psalm is dramatic in character, and that it must be distributed between three voices, and may have been possibly so sung in Divine service. The first voice utters v. 1: "He that sitteth in the secret place, that abideth in the shadow of the Almighty," and is taken up by the second voice, which sings v. 2. The first voice resumes at the beginning of v. 3, and continues to the end of v. 8. The second voice then utters the first clause of v. 9, "For Thou, O Jehovah, art my refuge." And the first voice begins with, "Thou hast made the Most High Thy habitation," and goes on to the end of v. 13. The third voice, which utters the words of God Himself, is heard in vs. 14-16. Probably this, on the whole, is the simplest explanation of the change of speakers in the Psalm; but v. 1 may have been sung by the choir rather than by a single voice. P.

Analysis. A declaration by the Psalmist, not personal but general (v. 1). A voice heard in soliloquy, expressing trust in Jehovah (v. 2). The Psalmist responds, assuring him of safety in all dangers (vs. 3-8). The voice is again heard addressing God with confident trust (v. 9a). Again the Psalmist responds with additional assurances (vs. 9b-13). God now speaks, confirming the hope of His servant (vs. 14-16). *De Witt.*

This Psalm would be full of interest found anywhere, standing in any relation; but has peculiar interest standing here in manifestly close relations to Psalm 90. The slightest atten-

tion to these two Psalms will show that they are paired together, the second a counterpart to the first. The prayer of Moses has in its foreground a sweeping mortality among the people of Israel. It speaks therefore of human frailty; of man returning back to dust, and of man's sin as calling forth the high displeasure of his Maker and demanding such a demonstration of it as the cutting off of a whole generation in the freshness of their manhood. But this sombre view of human life should not stand alone. Something should be said touching the strain of this Psalm 90 by way of exception. It should be said that those who live near to God shall abide under His protection; shall be shielded against the pestilence, protected from the fierce lion and poisonous adder, put under the charge of God's sleepless angels to be kept in all their ways, and crowned with the blessings of long life and God's full salvation. Such is the tone of Psalm 91. C.

The general drift of its scenery and allusions concur in showing that, like the last, we are indebted for this beautiful ode to the muse of Moses; that it was composed by him during the journey through the wilderness, shortly after the plague of the fiery serpents; when the children of Israel, having returned to a better spirit, were again received into the favor of Jehovah. Besides political enemies, the children of Israel in the wilderness had other evils in great numbers to encounter, from the nature and diseases of the climate, which exposed them to *sun smitings*, during the heat of the day; and to pestilential vapors, *moon smitings*, during the damp of the night, so as to render the miraculous canopy of the cloud that hung over them in the former season, and the miraculous column of fire that cheered and purified them in the latter, equally needful and refreshing. In Egypt they had seen much of the plague, and they had been threatened with it as a punishment for disobedience. Now in the Psalm before us, and especially in vs. 6-13, we have so clear and graphic a description of the whole of these evils presented to us, as to bring its composition directly home to the circumstances and the period here pitched upon, and to render it at least needless to hunt out for any other occasion. *J. M. Good.*

1. A better construction makes the parallel clauses of the first verse descriptive of an ideal person, with whom the speaker is then tacitly identified. As if he had said, "Happy the man who dwells," etc., and then added, "Such is my condition; I can say," etc. For the figure of a secret place or covert, see Psalms 27:5;

31 : 20 ; 32 : 7 ; for that of a shadow, Psalms 17 : 8 ; 36 : 7 ; 57 : 1. The Divine titles, *Highest* and *Almighty*, suggest the reason of this perfect safety. The last verb is strictly a reflexive, and as such means to take up one's lodgings, to domesticate one's self, implying a voluntary choice. A.—The word for “dwelleth” might equally well be translated *sitteth*, *i.e.*, under the covert, in the hiding-place, the sequestered shelter of the Most High. This man “shall abide,” lodge all night and by consequence perpetually under the shadow of the Almighty. The sense, He who lives in great nearness to God, making God his trust and refuge, may expect *permanent* protection. Stress is laid upon God's infinite power to shield His trustful people by the choice of those names for God which make His power prominent. Who can be otherwise than safe with the Almighty God for his Protector ? C.

1, 2. In each clause of vs. 1, 2 God is spoken of by a different name. God is “Most High,” far above all the rage and malice of enemies ; “Almighty,” so that none can stand before His power ; “Jehovah,” the God of covenant and grace, who has revealed Himself to His people ; and it is of such a God that the Psalmist says in holy confidence, He is “my God,” in whom I trust. P.

It is the character of a true believer that he *dwells in the secret place of the Most High* ; he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposes in Him as his rest ; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God ; worships within the veil, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with Him in solitude. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they *abide under the shadow of the Almighty* ; He shelters them, and comes between them and everything that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence under God's protection ; He will be their rest and refuge forever. II.—The place of God's presence is the place of refuge, of peace, of safety, of rest, to the soul that knows how to find Him and has learned to trust in Him. And every one can find Him who seeks Him by faith in Christ, and cultivates communion with Him in the spirit of a little child. To such a one nothing can come in reality as an evil. The storms of adversity and persecution, the calamities that agitate others with fear, and sweep away their possessions and their hopes, only drive this trusting soul the closer into its refuge. J. P. T.

3. *For lo, He will free thee from the fowler's*

snare, from the plague of mischiefs. The confiding soul is now addressed directly in the tone of promise. The *fowler's snare* is a figure for insidious and complicated dangers. The parallelism requires *plague* or *pestilence* to be taken as a metaphor, no less than *snare*. Both probably denote dangers arising from the craft of wicked enemies, to which the word translated *mischiefs* is peculiarly appropriate. A.

4. Covered under wings and feathers is a favorite Hebrew figure, open to the most common observation in the habits of domestic fowls. Our Lord has it in beautiful form (Matt. 23 : 37). C.—God protects believers with the greatest tenderness and affection ; intimated in that, *He shall cover thee with His feathers, under His wings*, which alludes to the hen *gathering her chickens under her wings*. By natural instinct she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection when she sees them in danger ; not only keeps them safe, but cherishes them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare His care of His people, who are helpless and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the wings of the Divine promise and providence. H.

God's providence means not merely His foresight, but His loving care—His providing for us in all things, as our heavenly Father—His loving arrangements for the supply of all our wants. It is this kind and loving providence, under which the creatures of His power and mercy, as the children of His grace, are invited to come and repose. If we do this, then we are safe and happy. All things are ours, and we may go and come secure in the care and love of our heavenly Father, and fearing no evil, till from on high He call us home. But without this loving faith, we are not ready to step across the threshold of our own door ; we are not ready to sit securely by our own fire-side ; we are not ready to lie down in peace upon our nightly slumbers. *Cheever.*

5, 6. Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger : “*Thou shalt not be afraid*, God by His grace will keep thee from disquieting, distrustful fear (that fear which hath torment) in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee ; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfection.” A believer *needs not fear*, and therefore *should not fear*, any ar-

row, because the point is off, the poison is out. *O death, where is thy sting?* It is also under Divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that. H.

6. The pestilence that walketh in darkness; the destruction that wasteth at noonday. The description is equally forcible and correct. The diseases of all hot climates, and especially where vegetation is highly luxuriant, and marshes and miry swamps are abundant, as in the wilderness here referred to, proceed from the accumulating vapors of the *night*, or from the violence of the sun's rays at *mid-day*. The Beriberi of Ceylon, the spasmodic cholera and jungle-fever of India, and the greater part of the fevers of intertropical climates, especially that called the yellow fever, chiefly originate from the first of these—"the *pestilence* that stalketh in darkness;" while sunstrokes or coups de soleil, apoplexies, inflammations of the brain, and liver complaints of most kinds proceed from the second, "the *destruction* that wasteth at noonday." And it is in allusion to this double source of mischief that the Psalmist exclaims most beautifully on another occasion (121 : 6) : "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." And hence the Israelites were miraculously defended against both during their passage through the wilderness by the pillar of a cloud in the daytime, to ward off the solar rays; and by the pillar of fire by night, to dissipate the collecting vapors, and preserve the atmosphere clear, dry, and healthy. J. M. Good.

7. It shall not come nigh thee. The singular refers to any and every one of the evils mentioned in vs. 5, 6. P.—Nigh him, but not so nigh as to hurt him; *the power of God can bring us near to danger, and yet keep us far from harm*. As good may be locally near us and yet virtually far from us, so may evil. The multitude thronged Christ in the Gospel, and yet but one touched Him so as to receive good; so Christ can keep us in a throng of dangers, that not one shall touch us to our hurt. Caryl.

Divine restraint enters into all things. The *nature* of things is but their limit assigned by God. The original relation of forces in the physical world is so settled by God that their interaction shall be bounded by definite results. To every effect wrought out in the development of the material universe it has been virtually

said, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." Scripture makes known the restraint which God puts on hearts and on moral beings. Lions dare not touch a Daniel. The history of the Church and of individual Christian life brings out instances of the restraining power which silently lays hold of man and renders his enmity innocuous. "It shall not come nigh thee" has often been verified. In all these instances we have but glimpses of that unseen Power by which in due time all principalities and powers, and whatever opposeth itself to God and His Church, shall be either turned unto Him or deprived of their power of injury. Chapman. —Amid all seeming confusion, every separate event has its separate destination. If pestilence has only some one person devoted to it in a city or community, that person it will assuredly find out, and execute the judgment of heaven regarding him. If there be a thousand persons allotted to it in a district, it will not allow one of the thousand to escape. If among the numbers who are dying there be one regarding whom it has no commission to seize upon him, that individual must remain untouched. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." It has a commission, and it will execute it; but then it cannot go beyond its commission. And in regard to every person to whom the event comes, it has a special end to accomplish; and it bears a special message, if he will but read it and attend to it. M' Cosh.

8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. First, indeed, because of thy own escape; secondly, on account of thy complete security; thirdly, for the sake of comparison; fourthly, because of the perfect pre-eminence of justice itself. For then it will not be the time of mercy, but of judgment; nor shall any mercy in any way be ever shown toward the wicked there, where no improvement can be hoped for. Bernard.

9. The change of persons is again perplexing. The Psalmist suddenly interrupts the address to himself which had been continued in one strain from v. 3 (and which is resumed again in the second clause of this verse, "Thou hast nade," etc.), to express his own trust in God. But whether we suppose the address in vs. 3-8, and again that which, beginning with the second member of v. 9, extends to the end of v. 13, to be the words of the Psalmist himself, or whether they are put into some other mouth with a view to musical effect—in either case the words are really a voice from heaven,

the promise of God uttered to and appropriated by the soul. P.

For Thou, Jehovah, (art) my refuge. The Most High hast thou made thy home (or habitation). The construction adopted in the English Bible is a forced one, only assumed in order to avoid the sudden change of person, which, however, is characteristic of this Psalm. A.

It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of Him, and then to live our life in Him as our habitation; to converse with Him, and delight in Him, and depend upon Him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God; we shall be welcome to Him as a man to his own habitation; then, too, we shall be safe in Him, shall be kept in *perfect peace* (Isa. 26: 3). H.—He who *makes* God his refuge shall find Him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. We must *make* the Lord our habitation by choosing Him for our trust and rest, and then we shall receive immunity from harm; no evil shall touch us personally, and no stroke of judgment shall assail our household. S.—It is therefore the *making* of God our habitation, upon which our safety lies; and this is the way to make God an habitation, thus to cast ourselves by faith upon His power and providence. *Jeremiah Dyke.*

10. There shall no evil befall thee.

It is a security in the very midst of evils. Not like the security of angels—safety in a world of safety, quiet in a calm; but it is quiet in a storm, safety amid desolation and the elements of destruction, deliverance where everything else is going to wreck. *C. Bradley.*—God doth not say no afflictions shall befall us, but *no evil*. *T. Watson.*—Though trouble and affliction befall thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God, and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though for *the present it be not joyous but grievous*, yet in the end it shall yield so well that thou thyself shalt own *no evil befell thee*. It is not an evil only, but there is a mixture of good in it and a product of good by it. Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling shall be taken under the Divine protection; *there shall no plague come nigh* that; nothing to do thee or thine any damage. H.

11. *For His angels He will charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* The plural *angels* shows that there is no allusion to a guardian spirit attending the individual believer, but merely to the angels collectively, as ministering spirits, the instrumental agents of God's providential care over His people. A.

They are the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, of which we are heirs; they have possession, and we have title, and shall in time possess it. We are called to much of the same employment with them; we must love the same God, and glorify Him by obedience, thanks, and praise, and so do they; therefore they are ministers for our good, and rejoice in the success of their labors, as ministers of Christ on earth do. There is not a sinner converted but it is the angels' joy, which sheweth how much they attend to that work. They are especially present and attendant on us in our holy assemblies and services of God; and therefore we are admonished (1 Cor. 11: 10) to reverence their presence and do nothing before them that is sinful or unseemly. The presence of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels must continually awe us into exact obedience. With the Church, they pry into the mystery of the dispensation of the Spirit to the Church. And so "by the Church"—that is, by God's dealings with the Church, is "made known the manifold wisdom of God" even to those "heavenly principalities and powers." In conclusion, Christ telleth us that in our state of blessedness we shall be "equal to the angels," and so shall live with them forever. *Baxter.*

In all thy ways. Your ways are God's ways, your way is the way commanded by God. If you be out of God's ways, you are out of your own way; if you be in your way, the angels shall keep you. *W. Bridge.*—While you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate or your liberty or your lives, as losing your way and leaving your way; nothing but sin exposeth you to soul-loss or misery. So long as you keep your way you shall keep other things; or if you lose any of them, you shall get what is better; though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by Him. *S. Salter.*

He shall give His angels charge over thee. When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, he alleged but one sentence of Scripture for himself, and this Psalm, out of which he borrowed it, made so plain against him, that he was fain to pick here a word and there a word, and leave out that which went before and came after, or else he had marred his cause. The Scripture is so pure and true that no word nor syllable thereof can make for the devil or for sinners. *H. Smith.*—Revelation discovers to faith, on the one hand, the hierarchies of the blessed angels, and, on the other, the corresponding gradations of evil spirits, principalities

ties, and powers who have abused their freedom, and who are ceaselessly laboring to impair and to destroy the true moral order of the universe. These spiritual beings, good and evil, act upon humanity as certainly, as constantly, as man himself acts upon the lower creatures around him, and thus it is that we "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." *Liddon*.

14-16. God's answer to the soul which trusts in Him. "God Himself comes forward to establish the faith of His servant, writes deeper in the soul so great a consolation, and confirms the testimony to His servant. 'He hath set his love upon Me; he knoweth My name; he calleth upon Me'—these are the marks of a true servant of God. God draws nigh to one who so draws nigh to Him." *P.*

What God Himself is overheard to say at the close of the Psalm is the glorious corner-stone of this edifice of confidence. Mark the cause assigned by the Lord for the warm interest which He feels in His servant thus exposed: "He has set his love upon Me; he has known My name." Mark how the Lord speaks, connecting His servant's love to Him and knowledge of His name with His own purpose of deliverance and exaltation, as if His honor were concerned to make it plain that the love is not misplaced: "I will deliver him." Mark what the Lord expects on the part of His servant: "He shall call upon Me." Mark the assurance of the Lord's gracious interposition, answering to His servant's calling upon Him: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him," etc. Nor is it to be all trouble with the man of God while he is fighting the good fight and finishing his course. Nay, there is so much enjoyment for him as to make him rather wish for its continuance, and welcome the concluding promise which he hears the Lord giving, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation." *R. S. Candlish*.

14. He does not say, Because he is without sin, because he has perfectly kept all My precepts, because he has merit and is worthy to be delivered and guarded. But he produces those qualities which are even found in the weak, the imperfect, and those still exposed to sin in the flesh—namely, adhesion, knowledge of His name, and prayer. *Musculus*.—These promises belong to those that have set their love upon God, that know His name, and that call upon Him. *H.*

There is one thing in this verse which may

encourage us very much. It is not because of *perfect* love that God will deliver. It is to the will to love and serve—it is to the *setting* the heart that the promise is made—to the "full purpose of heart" that is *set* to cleave unto the Lord. *M. B. M. Duncan*.—The love of the Christian is a delightful love (as Mr. Baxter called it), because there is in the Lord everything that is worthy of infinite and eternal admiration; and then there is the thought which produces a thrill of pleasure—whatever I admire I can, in some measure, possess. The illuminated eye of God's favorite sees everything in the Lord to supply his necessities; everything to satisfy his desires, all his own; which makes the soul delight itself in the Lord, and he rests in His love. Therefore, the Lord says of the object of His lovingkindness, "He hath set his love upon Me"—he hath taken off the heart from all idolatrous attachment to the creature, and placed it fixedly and supremely upon God. *W. Dawson*

Do for His sake deeds of love, and He will give thee His love. Still thyself, thy own cares, thy own thoughts for Him, and He will give thee Himself. Ask for Himself, and He will take thee into Himself. Truly a secret, hidden thing is the love of God, known only to them who seek it, and to them also secret, for what man can have of it here is how slight a foretaste of that endless ocean of His love! *Pusey*.—Sound love to God floweth from and is joined with sound knowledge of God, as His Majesty is declared unto us in Scripture; the believer who hath set his *love* upon God "*hath known My name*," saith He. *Dickson*.

15. *He shall call upon Me.* I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, and then I will answer—answer by promises, answer by providences, bringing in seasonable relief, and answer by graces, *strengthening them with strength in their souls*; thus He answered Paul with *grace sufficient*. *H.*

I will be with him in trouble. God hath made promises of His special presence with His saints in suffering. God will hold our head and heart when we are fainting! What if we have more afflictions than others, if we have more of God's company? God's honor is dear to Him; it would not be for His honor to bring His children into sufferings and leave them there; He will be with them to animate and support them; yea, when new troubles arise (Job 5:19). "He shall deliver thee in six troubles." *T. Watson*.

Communion with Christ is the best proof of Christ's existence and Christ's love. It is so

even in human life. Misgivings gather darkly round our heart about our friend in his absence ; but we seek his frank smile, we feel his affectionate grasp ; our suspicions go to sleep again. It is just so in religion. No man is in the habit of praying to God in Christ, and then doubts whether Christ is He "that should come." It is in the power of prayer to realize Christ, to bring Him near, to make you feel His life stirring like a pulse within you. Let but a man live with Christ, anxious to have his own life destroyed and Christ's life established in its place, losing himself in Christ, that man will have all his misgivings silenced. He who works, and *feels* he works—he who prays, and *knows* he prays—has got the secret of transforming life-failure into life-victory. F. W. R.

16. Long life ; literally, "length of days." The special promise of long life at the close, as a temporal blessing, is in accordance with the general character of the Old Testament. Still it is possible that men like the Psalmist, full of faith in God, attached a deeper and more spiritual meaning to promises and hopes like these, than was attached to them by the majority of their countrymen. P.

"I will satisfy him with long life," give him all his heart craves ; fill his largest desires. Thus there is an offset to the mournfulness of human frailty and swift mortality. It shall be well with those that fear God and walk softly before Him. Usually they have longer lives and more earthly blessings even in our age and in every age than the defiantly wicked. C. —They shall live long enough ; they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for, and are ready for heaven ; and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either *by* him or *upon* him ? They shall think it long enough, for God by His grace shall wean them from the world and make them willing to leave it. H.

Bernard interprets this of *heaven* ; because he thought nothing long that had an end. This, indeed, is the emphasis of heaven's joy ; those blessed souls never sin, never weep more ; they shall not only be with the Lord, but ever with the Lord. This is the accent which is set on the eulogies given to heaven in Scripture. 'Tis "an inheritance," and that an "incorruptible one, that fadeth not away ;" it is "a crown of glory," and that a weighty one ; yea, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory." Gurnall.

What we all need to realize more than we do,

is that we live in God. He is nearer to us than we are to our own bodies, and is only partly hidden from us by the garments of thing and circumstance wherewith He wraps Himself round. We stand as near to Him as did those Bible-men and women whom we are liable to think of as placed above all worldly cares, and as enjoying in all their life the consciousness of the presence and approval of God. They had their struggles and temptations, as we have ; and some of them complained that they looked for God on the right hand and on the left, and did not see Him, as some of us have also done. It was as hard for them as for us to lay hold upon the garments of God in the toil and turmoil of this world's strife, and as they succeeded, we also may succeed. If their cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him !" awakes an answering echo in our hearts, so, too, may their song of triumph when they were lifted from the depths, and found themselves in the secret place of the Most High. Daily we touch the garments of God, whether we know it or not. What we need is a heart enlightened by the knowledge of God and an eye that is willing to look through the deeds of daily life to the God behind them, if we would pierce through that which seems to that which is. God is not far from any one of us. What we call the ordinary and the commonplace are the garments which reveal His presence ; and we may reach through them to Him who is revealed in them, to cling forever to God Himself. Thus to recognize His presence and thus to cling is the sure privilege of every child of God. S. S. T.

Day and night ministers of grace, silent and unseen, are near to us, who have received a charge from God to keep us in all our ways. They will beat back and chase away the powers of darkness. God Himself is with you. Nothing can separate you from Him but your own unwillingness to have your home in the light and joy of His presence. When the noise of the world is loudest and the crowd thickest you can still be alone with Him, and dwell in perfect peace. Ah ! how wonderful is the blessedness of those who have learned the true secret of a devout life ! Partakers of the Divine nature, they partake the Divine bliss. They are in heaven already. They are one with God. He Himself finds delight in their childlike trust and their reverential love. To Him, their grateful thoughts of His goodness, which come and go all day long, and their ineffable joy when they remember that He is near, are sweeter

and nobler music than the pathetic chants which roll along the pillared aisles and vaulted roofs of ancient cathedrals, or the exulting hallelujahs of that mighty chorus which has sometimes made us think that we were listening to the songs and harps of heaven. And when in hours consecrated to devotion they are able to gaze more steadfastly on His face, and to enter into a more sustained and protracted communion with Him, His happiness and theirs are an anticipation, and more than an anticipation, of the blessedness of the immortal fellowship between Himself and the glorified spirits of the redeemed. At such times it is true of the joy of God Himself, as well as of the joy of the soul that worships Him, that a stranger cannot intermeddle with it. Yes, the soul that dwells

with Him is already in possession of a victorious strength, celestial peace, and Divine delight. The calamities of this world can only for a moment cloud its bliss. In the wilderness, fiery chariots wait to carry it to the upper skies. Choirs of angels descend and fill the night of its sorrow with music and rapture. In exile and loneliness it sees visions of the city of God. When storms and tempests rage, it sits in peace on lofty mountain-tops of faith and hope, and looks down upon the flashing lightning, and listens to the thunder rolling far beneath its feet. It dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and is satisfied with the pleasures which are at His right hand, and with the fulness of joy which is in His presence forevermore. *R. W. Dale.*

PSALM XCII.

A PSALM, A SONG FOR THE SABBATH DAY.

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| <p>1 It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD,
And to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High :</p> <p>2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning,
And thy faithfulness every night,</p> <p>3 With an instrument of ten strings, and with the psaltery ;
With a solemn sound upon the harp.</p> <p>4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work :
I will triumph in the works of thy hands.</p> <p>5 How great are thy works, O LORD !
Thy thoughts are very deep.</p> <p>6 A brutish man knoweth not ;
Neither doth a fool understand this :</p> <p>7 When the wicked spring as the grass,
And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish ;
It is that they shall be destroyed for ever :</p> <p>8 But thou, O LORD, art on high for evermore.</p> | <p>9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD,
For, lo, thine enemies shall perish ;
All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.</p> <p>10 But my horn hast thou exalted like <i>the horn</i>
of the wild-ox :
I am anointed with fresh oil.</p> <p>11 Mine eye also hath seen <i>my desire</i> on mine enemies,
Mine ears have heard <i>my desire</i> of the evil-doers that rise up against me.</p> <p>12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree :
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.</p> <p>13 They that are planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.</p> <p>14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ;
They shall be full of sap and green :</p> <p>15 To shew that the LORD is upright ;
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.</p> |
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THIS Psalm is called a Psalm for the Sabbath-day, and, as we learn from the Talmud, was appointed to be used in the temple service on that day. It was sung in the morning, when,

on the offering of the first lamb, the wine was poured out as a drink-offering unto the Lord. It celebrates in joyful strain the greatness of God's works, and especially His righteous gov-

ernment of the world, as manifested in the overthrow of the wicked, and the prosperity and final triumph of the righteous. The *apparent* success of the ungodly for a time is admitted, but this is a mystery which worldly men, whose understanding has become darkened, cannot penetrate (v. 6). The Psalm therefore touches upon the same great principles of the Divine government which are laid down in such Psalms as the first, the thirty-seventh, the forty-ninth, and the seventy-third. But here there is no struggle with doubt and perplexity, as in the seventy-third; the poet is beyond all doubt, above all perplexity; he has not fallen down to the low level of the brutish man (compare 73 : 22 with v. 6 of this Psalm); he is rejoicing in the full and perfect conviction of the righteousness of God. P.

As one main design of the Sabbath was to afford an opportunity for the admiring contemplation of God's works or doings, the Psalm before us was peculiarly appropriate at such a time, and the third clause of the inscription is evidently correct. A.

1. It is good. The Sabbath is the day which God has consecrated, and which we should consecrate to God by turning away from our every-day occupations (Isa. 58 : 13) and attending to the praise and worship of God, the blessed occupation of the Sabbath. It is good, *i.e.*, not only good in the eyes of God, but also good for man, of benefit to his inmost being, precious and blessed. D.

When saints assemble together for devotion, they call into action all the graces of the Spirit; faith rests upon His promises—love grows in the contemplation of perfection—gratitude is felt warm and vivid in the heart—adherence to Divine truth is experienced so as to produce a resolution to buy the truth, and sell it not—reverence for the service of God and for His majesty, deference to His authority, a desire of being acquainted with His will, and entire resignation of ourselves to His discipline, are the sentiments expressed in praise and prayer. These actuate the breasts of Christians, and they produce a great mass of devotional feeling experienced nowhere else. They cannot but be acceptable to God in their insulated state; but when combined together, when there are thousands engaged in the same worship, and actuated by the same graces of the Spirit of God, called into exercise on these occasions—who can fail to perceive how acceptable such a spectacle must be to the great object of worship! R. Hall.

To sing praises, to give thanks. Thankful praise is a just and due tribute for all

God's blessings. It is a debt always owing and always paying; upon the due discharge of this debt the soul will find peace. And a thankful heart to God for His blessings is the greatest blessing of all. *Sibs.*—*Singing is the music of nature.* The Scriptures tell us the mountains sing, the valleys sing, the trees of the wood sing. Nay, the air is the birds' music-room, where they chant their musical notes. *Singing is the music of saints.* They have performed this duty in their greatest straits, in their greatest deliverances, and in their greatest plenties. In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. *Singing is the music of angels.* Job tells us, "The morning stars sang together." When the heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they delivered their message in a "laudatory singing," the whole company of angels making a musical choir. *Singing is the music of heaven.* Saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride-chamber (Rev. 15 : 3). J. Wells.

2. In the morning, every night. Grace is purposely connected with the morning-dawn, for it itself is morning-light, which breaks through the night every morning; so faithfulness is also combined with the night-seasons, for amid the perils of the loneliness of the night it is the best companion, and nights of affliction are the foil of its verification. D.—God is Alpha and Omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with His praise, who begins and ends it for us with mercy. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labor in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. Gurnall.

We are ever in want, and God is ever giving; prayers, therefore, and praises are ever suitable and becoming. Let no day go without observation and review of God's carriage toward you, and yours toward Him: of mercies and afflictions; of your duties and the frame of heart in them; of your sins or inclinations to sin; and so likewise of any remarkable providence of God related to you by others, or seen or heard by yourself; and let God have the glory of what is good. J. Mason.

Wherever there is material for prayer, there is material for thanksgiving. If we need to pray to God even for our bread, then even for our bread let us give thanks to Him. If to-day's supply does not come by chance, nor because we were similarly supplied yesterday and the day before, but because God regards our

wants of to-day and for this day also grants us life ; then this day ought we to thank Him for this day's mercies, though they be but the same as yesterday's, and what all other men are enjoying. As each rising sun, touching the wing of the sleeping birds, wakes through the woods a fresh burst of glad melody, as if sun had never risen before ; so let each day's mercies awake our hearts afresh to the sense of God our Father's smile, and turn our lives toward His light. "Where nothing is deserved, everything should be received with thanksgiving ;" how then shall we ever discharge our debt of thanks, who deserve to know the power of God's anger, but experience the power of His mercy ? *Dods.*

Thy faithfulness. In every perfect union there must be mutual confidence, and a strict fulfilment of engagements on both sides. If man be trustful, God must be "faithful." In this great contract there must be in God a something that will answer to the faith that is in His humble follower. Thus faith in man and faithfulness in God are the two members of one spiritual harmony. Neither is to be conceived without the other. Man without God would be fatherless ; and God has almost permitted us to say that, without His people (the "little children" whom He wills not "to perish"), He would Himself be, as it were, childless in His own celestial family ! The highest object of man's existence is undoubtedly to hold communion with his God. For this his nature was originally framed, and in this alone will his nature ever find contentment or repose. God is, as it were, the counterpart to his being ; the Divine and human elements are fitted to each other ; and humanity, without the corresponding principle of Deity, is a thing imperfect, insufficient, incomplete. *W. A. B.*

5. *How great are Thy doings, Jehovah, (how) exceedingly deep Thy thoughts!* Thoughts and doings are correlative expressions, signifying plan and execution. *Deep*, not mysterious, but vast, immense, and inexhaustible, corresponding to *great* in the other clause. *A.*—The works of God are exceeding great ; very deep are His thoughts, which give shape to human history, in which they themselves gain form. Man can neither measure the greatness of the Divine works, nor fathom the depths of the Divine thoughts ; the man that is enlightened, however, discerns the immeasurableness of the former and the unfathomableness of the latter. *D.*

The context shows sufficiently that the "works" thought of here are not primarily

those of creation, but those of Providence—the Divine agencies in controlling human life—rewarding and punishing the well or ill-doing of men. It is of these that the Psalmist exclaims : "How great are Thy works ; how very deep are Thy thoughts"—thoughts in the sense of counsels, plans, principles of moral government. The Psalmist is in most profound sympathy with God in these works of His, for he cries out, "Thou, Lord, hast gladdened me by these works of Thine." *C.*

And Thy thoughts are very deep.

The Lord's plans are as marvellous as His acts ; His designs are as profound as His doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Providence is inexhaustible, and the Divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. *S.*

6, 7. Expressively he wrote : "The man-brute will not know ; the fool will not understand this"—viz., that when the wicked spring up with rapid and apparently vigorous growth as the summer flowers in Palestine, it is that they may ripen soon for a swift destruction. The man-brute precisely translates the Hebrew words ; one whom God has endowed with manhood, but who has debased himself to brutehood ; a man as being of God's creation in His own image, but a brute as being self-moulded into the image of the baser animals ! *C.*

8. *And Thou (art) Most High to eternity, Jehovah!* This brief but pregnant proposition is the centre of the Psalm, and at the same time a summary of its contents. The superlative expression *Most High* is here used to translate a single Hebrew word which strictly means a height or high place, but here denotes that which holds the highest place in the scale of being. *A.*—All the joy of the Psalmist culminates in this great central fact on which all the doctrine of the Psalm rests, that Jehovah is throned on high forevermore ; from that flows the overthrow of the wicked and the triumph of the righteous. *P.*

Most high forevermore ; literally, "art height," the abstract used for the concrete, to imply that the essence of all that is *high* is concentrated in Jehovah. When God and the cause of holiness seem low, God is really never higher than then ; for out of seeming weakness He perfects the greatest strength. When the wicked seem *high*, they are then on the verge of being cast down forever. The believer who can realize this will not despair at the time of his own depression, and of the seeming exaltation of the

wicked. If we can feel "*Jehovah Most High forevermore*," we can well be unruffled, however low we lie. *Fausset*.

10. Anointed with fresh oil. Every kind of benediction and refreshment I have received, do receive, and shall receive, like one at a feast, who is welcomed as a friend, and whose head is copiously anointed with oil or fragrant balm. *Geier*.

11. *And my eye has looked upon my enemies ; of those rising up against me, evil-doers, my ears shall hear.* The sense is that he sees and hears what is become of them. Their destruction is implied, though not expressed. The word translated *enemies* occurs only here. According to the most probable etymology it means *watchers*, liers in wait or ambush. *A*.

12-15. What is true of the Psalmist is true of all who are partakers of the same faith. The date-palm and the cedar are selected as the loveliest images of verdure, fruitfulness, undecaying vigor and perpetuity. "Throughout the year, in the winter's cold as in the summer's heat, the palm continues green. Not by years, but by centuries is the cedar's age reckoned." (*Tholuck*.) There is also a contrast: "The wicked spring as the green herb, or grass" (v. 7), which soon withers away, "The righteous spring as the palm," which is ever green and ever fruitful. Besides this, there are only two passages in the Old Testament where the palm is used in comparison—Cant. 7 : 7, where it is said of the bride, "Thy stature is like to a palm-tree ;" Jer. 10 : 5, where the idols are said to be "upright as a palm-tree ;" and one in the Apocrypha (Eccl. 24 : 14), "I was exalted like a palm-tree in Engaddi." This, as Dr. Howson has noticed, is remarkable, considering the beauty of the tree and its frequent recurrence in the scenery of Palestine. *P*.

12. Like the palm-tree. The large tuft of broad leaves which crowns the palm-tree, always retains its verdure ; these leaves rise erect in the centre, and widely expand on each side of the stem, from which they immediately proceed, measuring from six to eight feet in length ; the small white flowers (shielded by a spathe or sheath) comes out in long bunches from beneath them, being attached to the trunk by small stalks. It grows in a stately column, from thirty to fifty feet in height, crowned with a verdant capital of waving branches covered with long spiral leaves. Though the tree arrives at maturity thirty years after planting, it continues in full strength seventy years longer, producing annually fifteen or twenty clusters of dates, each weighing fifteen or twenty

pounds. It is one of the most beautiful trees in the vegetable kingdom—upright, lofty, and verdant. The utility of this tree is not less remarkable than its beauty. Its clusters of fruit, which are frequently very large, furnish a great part of the diet of the inhabitants of Arabia and Persia ; whole families in Upper Egypt, we are told, subsist entirely upon it. Gibbon says, that the Asiatics celebrated three hundred and sixty uses to which the trunk, branches, leaves, juice, and fruit were applied. *Anon*.

There is no more charming and majestic sight than the palm-tree of the oasis, this king among the trees of the plain, with its proudly raised diadem of leaves, its attitude as it looks far away into the distance and gazes into the face of the sun, its perennial verdure and its vegetative power, which is continually renewing itself from the root—a symbol of life in the midst of a world of death. From the earliest times the palm-tree has been an emblem of longevity, of fruitfulness and victory, of unity and peace. *D*.

Like a cedar in Lebanon. Along with the palm-tree there stands here the cedar, the prince of the trees of the mountain, and more especially of Mount Lebanon. The most obvious point of comparison is its stately, lofty growth ; then in general the intensity of its power of growing, but also the perennial verdure of its foliage and the fragrance which it breathes out. *D*.—As the palm among the trees in the plain, so is the cedar in the mountain. The palm is distinguished by its tallness and fruitfulness ; the cedar, by its strength and longevity. The palm rises in a single stem to sixty or one hundred feet, and bears fifteen or twenty clusters of dates, weighing each as many pounds ; the cedar rises to ninety feet, with wide-spreading, umbrageous boughs, and lives about three thousand years. Each of these trees is in its own respects a striking emblem of the righteous man, who enjoys the protection and blessing of God. *M*.

In the excavations of the palace of one of the Assyrian kings, some fragments of cedar beams were found by Mr. Layard, which have since been transported to England, and are now preserved in the British Museum. Mr. Carruthers, keeper of the Botanical Department of the Museum, has made a careful microscopic examination of the wood-cells of these beams, and confirms Mr. Layard's opinion that they were cedars from Lebanon. Thus these fragments have withstood the wear of time and the destroying chemical influences for perhaps thirty centuries, and are still the fragrant, incorruptible wood of the temple. Other woods may be

riddled with worm-holes ; no worm will touch the cedar. Giant eucalypti and sequoias may be "rotten to the core a thousand years before their falls ;" there is not, and never has been, a false hearted cedar. *Woodruff.*

"The righteous," says the Psalmist, "shall flourish like a palm-tree." That is one part of our life ; to be upright, graceful, gentle, like that most beautiful of Oriental trees. But there is another quality added, "He shall spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus." That is, his character shall be sturdy, solid, broad ; he shall protect others as well as himself ; he shall support the branches of the weaker trees around him ; he shall cover a vast surface of the earth with his shadow ; he shall grow and spread and endure ; he and his works shall make the place where he was planted memorable for future times. *A. P. Stanley.*

The palm-tree and cedar grow because they are fed by hidden resources. The palm in the desert is fed by hidden springs that flow beneath the surface of the dry sand ; its roots drink deep and are sustained, and they send up the moisture into the leaves and branches, and they are refreshed and invigorated. The roots of the cedar are fed by the streams that come down from the snow-crowned tops of Lebanon ; they go far and wide into the fissures of the rocks, securing stability by their sturdy grasp, and continuing strong by drinking of the perpetual supply that comes down from the melting snows. So the righteous in this world grow and flourish. Like the palm, they are fed by hidden resources ; with joy they draw water out of the wells of salvation, and Jesus declared that men thirsting for salvation were to come unto Him and drink, and that the water He would give them should be in them a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Like the cedar, the righteous grow, for they are fed by hidden resources which come from above ; the water of life flows down from the river of life that flows by the throne of God. D. Thoms.

13. The figure need not be so far pressed as to imply that such trees actually grew in the temple-court. Still it is by no means improbable that the precincts of the temple, like the Haram es-Sherif, contained trees. P.—The allusion to being planted in the house of the Lord is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all "high places" used for worship. This is still common ; nearly every palace, and mosque, and convent in the country has such trees in the courts, and, being well protected there, they

flourish exceedingly. Solomon covered all the walls of the "Holy of Holies" round about with palm-trees. They were thus planted, as it were, within the very house of the Lord ; and their presence there was not only ornamental, but appropriate and highly suggestive. The very best emblem, not only of patience in well-doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a flourishing old age, a peaceful end, a glorious immortality. *W. M. Thomson.*

14. They shall be fruitful ; were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value ; but *they shall still bring forth fruit*, the products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and a useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified and others are edified. These are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege as well as the duty of the righteous to abound ; and it is the matter of a promise as well as the matter of a command. It is promised that they shall bring forth fruit in old age. Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work. This indeed shows that they are upright ; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. *H.*

God promises to His people that they shall still bring forth fruit in their age, and sometimes it is so verified that their last days are their best days of usefulness. They have to forego some kinds of labor, such as require enterprise or bodily strength ; but there are others in which, by their experience, though with feeble hands, they may make themselves greatly useful. It will be the prayer of an old disciple that he may not fall into utter helplessness, nor outlive his usefulness, and the effort to keep up will tend to fulfil the prayer, and enable him to keep on. *W. H. Lewis.*—Aged believers possess a ripe experience, and by their mellow tempers and sweet testimonies they may feed many. Even if bedridden, they may bear the fruit of patience ; if poor and obscure, their lowly and contented spirit may become the admiration of those who know how to appreciate modest worth. Grace does not leave the saint when the keepers of the house tremble ; the promise is still sure though the eyes can no longer read it ; and the voice of the Spirit in the soul is still melodious when the daughters of music are brought low. Blessed be the Lord for this ! Because even to hoar hairs He is the I AM, who made His people, He therefore bears and carries them. *S.*

How beautiful is the old age of piety—the faith and devotion that through a long life have waited upon God, merging into the peace of Christ's coming, and the joy of the heavenly rest!—no fears, no anxieties, no cares, no doubts, but a trust in God so calm and full, that even death is waited for in holy expectation, as the consolation promised to Israel, as the longed-for vision of Christ. This rich peace in prospect of death comes of a life of faith, “just and devout, according to the Word of God.” A holy life is the prelude of a happy death. But the aged saint is not simply waiting for his departure; he is not severed from the present and translated beforehand into the future. Sometimes such a one fancies that, because his days of activity are over, he has outlived his usefulness; but his life of patience and hope, his mature and serene piety, his devout waiting upon God are a continual argument for the Gospel. He still brings forth fruit in old age. The cedar, with the growth of centuries upon it, still flourishes in majestic beauty. “The palm-tree remains green all the year round, in the cold of winter no less than in the heat of summer. It grows slowly, but steadily, uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. Drawing its moisture from hidden springs, when the green of the meadows is withered and the earth is parched to powder,” the palm-tree still lifts aloft its verdant roof of leaves. J. P. T.

12-15. The palm-tree is the glory of Palestine, magnificently tall and beautiful, and all its parts made useful to meet human wants. So the cedars of Lebanon are unsurpassed in grandeur. The figure which compares the righteous to the palm and the cedar is still heightened by supposing them to be planted in the house of the Lord and to flourish in the courts of His temple. Their *character*—all that which makes them righteous men and not wicked; good men and wise rather than sen-

sual, brutish, foolish; finds its root and life-power in the household of the Lord where God reveals His love and makes known His name and breathes His own purity into the souls of His sincere and humble worshippers. These are the great truths so beautifully clothed with Oriental imagery in our passage. Such men survive to a ripe old age, fruitful all the way, living witnesses that the *Lord*, the Jehovah who keeps covenant with His people, is upright, the rock of support to His trustful children, in whom, moreover, there never can be the least iniquity—never a shade of unrighteousness. C.

A great many old people do enter very largely upon the higher life before they have done with this. There is no pull upon them but love and duty, and these pull both ways, toward God and toward man—and strongly toward righteousness in its relations to both worlds. Let the old man stand like a marble pillar under the good and true. He ought to realize that the breeze which fans his cheek is the breeze of the morning. The finest fire we have seen was the sparkle of old eyes, lit up by the courage and hope of the rising sun. Die? The old man is not going to die. He has no thought of dying. He is only getting ready to live. *Interior.*

15. Thus in the end God's righteous government of the world will be manifested. The flourishing of the workers of iniquity has been but for a moment (vs. 7, 9, 11); the joy and prosperity of the righteous is forever. This is the signal proof of God's righteousness; this is the justification of the Psalmist's confidence resting ever on that unshaken “Rock.” P. —For shelter, for defence, for indwelling, for foundation, God is our rock. He is true and righteous altogether, and so we weave the end of the Psalm with its beginning, and make a coronet of it for the head of our Beloved. “*It is a good thing to sing praises unto the Lord,*” for “*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*” S.

PSALM XCIII.

- 1 THE LORD reigneth ; he is apparelled with
majesty ;
The LORD is apparelled, he hath girded him-
self with strength :
The world also is stablished, that it cannot
be moved.
2 Thy throne is established of old :
Thou art from everlasting.
3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,

- The floods have lifted up their voice ;
The floods lift up their waves.
4 Above the voices of many waters,
The mighty breakers of the sea,
The LORD on high is mighty.
5 Thy testimonies are very sure :
Holiness becometh thine house,
O LORD, for evermore.

THIS short Psalm is left by the compilers without a word as to its author or occasion. Its leading thought, the majesty and glory of Jehovah's reign over His creatures, is remarkably in harmony with the strain of the Psalm preceding. The thought of the Psalm is at once simple and sublime. "The Lord reigneth," all glorious, with all power ; has reigned through all the ages of the past, rising infinitely above all opposing forces, and finally crowning all His glorious natural attributes with the highest moral perfections, truth and purity. C.

This Psalm, like the two that precede it, goes back to the beginning of history. The subject is Jehovah, the God of revelation, ruling in majesty over all hostile powers, in executing the purposes of His grace. The Theocratic Psalms, beginning "Jehovah is King," are no less Messianic than those commonly so designated, and in the same general direction. In fact they steadily converge toward the event in which they both find their fulfilment, the ascension of our blessed Lord to the right hand of the Father. D.

The substance of this Psalm is contained in the eighth verse of the preceding Psalm. It celebrates the majesty of Jehovah as ruler of the universe. He is Creator of the world. He has been its King from everlasting ; it rests upon Him, and is stayed by His might. All the powers of nature obey Him, however lawless they may seem, as all the swelling and rage of men, of which those are but a figure, must obey Him. But His majesty and His glory are seen, not only in controlling the powers of nature, and whatsoever exalteth and opposeth itself against Him, but in the faithfulness of His Word, and in the holiness of His house. As the Psalm speaks of a particular manifestation of Jehovah's kingly

rule, of a time when He has taken to Himself His great power and reigned, it may in this sense be termed Messianic. For, as Delitzsch has pointed out, the Old Testament prophecy concerning the kingdom of God consists of two series of predictions, the one of which speaks of the reign of the anointed of Jehovah out of Zion, the other of the reign of Jehovah Himself as the great King over all the earth. These two lines of prophecy converge in the Old Testament, but never meet. Only here and there do we discern an intimation (as in 45 : 7) that the two are one. P.

The Scriptures do not propose to prove the attributes of God. These shine forth in His wonderful actions, which were to His ancient people familiar throughout their history. But, ever and anon, referring to these great facts, the inspired penman utters the most beautiful and enrapturing views of the Divine character and government. *M. Simpson.*

The subject of this magnificent Psalm is the stability of God in His natural and moral kingdom. He is represented as a king upon his throne, robed in majesty and girded with strength ; to Him the world is indebted for its stability, since He is from everlasting and His throne was established of old. Against Him, thus sitting on His throne, the wild, turbulent floods rise in their fury, as if they would drive Him from His established power, but the Lord, seated on high, is mightier than all the disturbing forces, whether of nature or of nations, which lift themselves against His authority. And of this stability His law and moral government partake ; His testimonies or precepts are very sure ; they may be relied upon, for they have the permanency of God in them. Holiness becometh His house forever ; there are fixed

proprieties in the worship of Him and in the relations of the worshipper, which will not pass away.

The stability of God presented to us in the Scriptures consists in His fixed character and purposes, backed by unlimited power. It is not *law*—regular and uniform sequence, dependent on the necessity of things—to which the Bible refers the order of nature. There is a will above law, and a character of infinite wisdom and goodness behind will, which is the support of the universe. If ever the Scriptures seem to represent God as arbitrary, as willing and decreeing without a reason, the representation, which is made in order to set forth in a strong way the unalterableness and irresistibleness of the decree of God, is corrected by other passages where the decrees of God appear as His counsels, the results of His perfect wisdom and moral excellence. *T. D. Woolsey.*

1. The Lord reigneth. It is a kind of proclamation in which God's people are invited to declare before men and angels that the Lord is King, He and He only. It is the response of the Church to the preaching of the Gospel, so rapturously hailed in Isaiah; the preaching of the messenger "that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" *W. Binnie.*

The Lord reigneth! And all history, sacred and profane, shows that He is bringing out of early ignorance, rudeness, wars, and widespread vice a continually increasing amount of knowledge, wisdom, civilization, justice, and righteousness. *T. Hill.*—We have here the history of the Church of God deduced from the text, "*Jehovah reigneth.*" These words are to us as "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts." So long as they are left us, all that threatens us from without is only like the noise of the breaking wave. The unspeakable comfort conveyed in this assurance is ever tested in the experience of God's people. There is no truth more precious to the heart of the Christian than that "*the Lord reigneth.*" The conviction of this must carry us far above all cares and fears. A personal God, a living God, a reigning God, alike in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and this God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—such are the steps by which we reach a height, where, far removed from the turmoil of men, we gain a comprehensive and clear view of earth and its concerns. I would not exchange the assurance

which these two words, "*Jehovah reigneth,*" convey, for all the wisdom, combined with all the power of this world. Received into my heart, they are the solution of every difficulty, the end of all perplexity. *A. E.*

The world is established that it cannot be moved. This stability is an emanation of the wisdom and power of God, of wisdom which has contrived it as the theatre where He is carrying forward His great plan, and which must be kept in its place as long as the plan demands, and of power which deals with unyielding matter, as easily as the potter with the clay. The agitated sea and air, the flood and the lightning do their work, and that on the whole a beneficent work according to God's laws, without endangering the safety of the system. Since man has been placed on the earth its face and frame-work have remained nearly the same. Nay, earth outlasts all attacks upon it, whether occasional and violent, or silent and continual, and will endure until it shall be remodelled again to become a dwelling-place of the saints. *Woolsey.*

2. One glorious personage, Eternal and Divine, one grand central figure dominates human history from first to last, as He does all history of worlds of being beyond our ken, one who now as always, always as now, before or since His manifestation in the flesh, is the King of men, the real operative and controlling spiritual force in human history throughout, the Alpha and the Omega, the Eternal Son of God, the Lord and the Heir of all things, for us made man. Him we own as *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, to whom *all power is given in heaven and on earth*, in the unseen worlds and in the seen, in things eternal and in the things of time. *Medd.*

3-5. All the raging of the world will not be able to hinder the progress of the kingdom of God and its ultimate breaking through to the glory of triumph. The sea, with its vast mass of waters, with the constant restlessness of its waves, with its unceasing pressing upon the firm land, and its foaming against the rocks, is an emblem of the God-estranged, God-opposed Gentile world; while the streams are an emblem of the world-kingdoms, just as the Nile is a symbol of the Egyptian, the Tigris, swift as an arrow, of the Assyrian, and the winding Euphrates of the Babylonian. These streams, as the poet says with a confident look upward to Jehovah, have lifted up, have lifted up their voice; the streams lift up their noise. But Jehovah's majesty in the heavens soars above all the noisy majesties here below; their waves,

though lashed ever so high, can never reach His throne. He is King of His people, Lord of His Church, which retains His revelation, and worships in His temple. In virtue of His unapproachable, all-overcoming kingship, this revelation is inviolable; His testimonies, which minister to the setting up of His kingdom and promise its future presentation in glory, are sure. And holiness becometh His temple. D.

3, 4. In the Old Testament the floods are often compared with the rage of the peoples, and the rebellion of man against the will of God. God lets people work against His kingdom in this world. It is not to be always so. The kingdom of God *is* in the earth, and the kingdom of God admits of opposition. But the opposition, even here on earth, all comes to nothing. "Thou art mightier than the noise of many waters;" the floods "have lifted up their voice;" but Thou "sittest upon the floods, yea, Thou sittest King forever." It is an experience repeated over and over again, in the history of individuals and in the history of the world. A. M.—There is a difference between violences in the moral system and those in the kingdom of nature. The wild forces in the latter case obey an established law and do a beneficent work; all, at least, except the earthquake, into the purpose of which men have not yet been able to penetrate. But violence in the moral world, the fury and wild force of nations, as of individuals, is not only against moral order but also against the original conception of the system. The fact of sin, then, the impetuous rage of sin on the great scale, looks as if finite beings were getting the better of God, as if they were disappointing Him, and marring somewhat the majesty of His throne, when they lift up their waves against Him. But it is far otherwise: the Lord on high is in the end shown to be "mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." For, *first*, the law of retribution is continually coming into play, when nations commit great crimes. The blind force of finite minds punishes itself, and thus clothes God before the eyes of His creatures with majesty, and establishes His throne. And, *secondly*, God draws good out of evil. As in storm, and flood, and lightning, so here His final purpose is beneficent, although, through the perversity of man, not always attained. Sometimes He chastises their pride, and a humbled nation, bowing in repentance before Him, will henceforth have in its hand the key of prosperity, will respect the rights of others more, and learn lessons more readily. Sometimes a vast structure of injustice

on which they set their hearts, which they upheld by all sophistry in defiance of truth and God, is made the source of their present ruin, but out of the trunk grows up again a vigorous tree, which will flourish for ages. A lesson of justice has been burned into them which they will not forget. Sometimes they cast God away in voluptuous refinement and heartless scepticism. They are punished by dissolution of civil order, by wild passions in society, by strife of class with class, by political revolution. They are shaken until they acknowledge God again and become able to have an orderly and established government.

5. The Psalmist passes on by an easy sequence to teach us that God's testimonies or precepts are sure; that is, are true, permanent, and to be relied upon. If the swelling waters that lift up their voice are symbols of disorder among nations as well as in nature, the transition is yet more smooth; for from the majesty and power of God, as displayed against rebellious nations, we go directly to His precepts which they have violated, and which He upholds by His judgments. *Woolsey.*

Thy testimonies are very sure. As in Providence the throne of God is fixed beyond all risk, so in revelation His truth is beyond all question. As the rocks remain unmoved amid the tumult of the sea, so does Divine truth resist all the currents of man's opinion and the storms of human controversy; they are not only sure, but *very sure*. Our faith is grounded upon the eternal truth of the Most High. S.—The promises no less than the precepts are God's *testimonies*, or the witnesses or declarations of His mind and will to mankind. And He seems here to speak of those great and precious promises concerning the erection and establishment of His kingdom in the world by the Messiah; which, saith He, are infallibly true, and shall certainly be accomplished in thy time, *M. Pool.*

Holiness becomes Thy house, O Lord, forever. God's Church is His house; it is a holy house, cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in His service. The holiness of it is its beauty; nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image, and an entire devotedness to His honor; and it is its strength and safety. It is the holiness of God's house that secures it against the many waters and their noise; where there is purity, there shall be peace. H.—"Holiness becometh Thine house," the Hebrew word ["becometh"] combining, as in Psalms 33 : 1, the two ideas of beauty and fitness, expressing therefore the

beauty of fitness. Holiness, moral purity, exemption from all sin, is appropriate and exquisitely beautiful in Thine house, the place of Thine earthly abode, where Thy worshipping

people meet Thee face to face. Let them appear there before this faithful and glorious God with clean hands and pure heart, in the beauty of holiness. C.

PSALM XCIV.

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| <p>1 O LORD, thou God to whom venegance belongeth,
Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth,
shine forth.</p> <p>2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth :
Render to the proud <i>their</i> desert.</p> <p>3 LORD, how long shall the wicked,
How long shall the wicked triumph ?</p> <p>4 They prate, they speak arrogantly :
All the workers of iniquity boast themselves.</p> <p>5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD,
And afflict thine heritage.</p> <p>6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.</p> <p>7 And they say, The LORD shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob consider.</p> <p>8 Consider, ye brutish among the people :
And ye fools, when will ye be wise ?</p> <p>9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear ?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see ?</p> <p>10 He that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct,
<i>Even</i> he that teacheth man knowledge ?</p> <p>11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man,
That they are vanity [<i>a breath</i>].</p> <p>12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest,
O LORD,
And teachest out of thy law ;</p> | <p>13 That thou mayest give him rest from the
days of adversity,
Until the pit be digged for the wicked.</p> <p>14 For the LORD will not cast off his people,
Neither will he forsake his inheritance.</p> <p>15 For judgment shall return unto righteousness :
And all the upright in heart shall follow it.</p> <p>16 Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers ?
Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity ?</p> <p>17 Unless the LORD had been my help,
My soul had soon dwelt in silence.</p> <p>18 When I said, My foot slippeth ;
Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.</p> <p>19 In the multitude of my thoughts [<i>doubts</i>]
within me
Thy comforts delight my soul.</p> <p>20 Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee,
Which frameth mischief by statute ?</p> <p>21 They gather themselves together against the
soul of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood.</p> <p>22 But the LORD hath been my high tower ;
And my God the rock of my refuge.</p> <p>23 And he hath brought upon them their own
iniquity,
And shall cut them off in their own evil ;
The LORD our God shall cut them off.</p> |
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THE Psalm opens with an appeal to God to execute righteous vengeance on wicked rulers or judges who oppress and crush the helpless, while in their folly they dream that his long-suffering is but the supineness of indifference. It concludes with the expression of a calm confidence that God's righteousness will be finally manifested. The righteous, taught by God's

fatherly discipline, and upheld by Him, can wait for the end, when the wicked shall reap the reward of their wickedness, and shall be utterly destroyed. The conviction thus expressed of the righteousness of God's government is similar to that in Psalm 92, except that here this conviction is grounded more directly on personal experience. P.

1. God to whom vengeance belongeth. There is a distinction between revenge and vengeance. "Revenge," says Dr. Johnson, "is an act of passion, vengeance of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes avenged."

And it is from not attending to this essential distinction that the scorner attributes a vindictive spirit to the Almighty, as if he found delight in wreaking vengeance on an adversary. The cal which the Psalmist here makes on God as a God to whom vengeance belongeth, is no other than if he had said, "O God, to whom justice belongeth!" Vengeance, indeed, is not for man, because with man's feelings and propensities it would ever degenerate into revenge. "I will be even with him," says nature; "I will be above him," says grace. *Bouchier.*

God of retributions, Jehovah, God of retributions, shine forth! A very natural prayer when innocence is trampled down and wickedness exalted on high. If the execution of justice be a right thing—and who can deny the fact?—then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer. S.

6. Widow and stranger they kill, and orphans they murder. The strongest description of injustice and violence is given by saying that they not only wrong but murder the very classes of sufferers, who in the law are constantly exhibited as objects of compassion.

7. And they say, Jehovah will not see, and the God of Jacob will not attend. The same impious presumption is expressed in Psalms 10: 11, 13; 14: 1; 59: 7. The Divine names are, as usual, significant. That the self-existent and eternal God should not see, is a palpable absurdity; and scarcely less so, that the God of Israel should suffer His own people to be slaughtered without even observing it. The last verb means to mark, note, notice.

8. Attend ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye act wisely? The first verb is the same with that at the end of the preceding verse. It is stronger than the English word *attend*, implying in all cases intelligent attention.

A.—The utter folly of this denial of a Divine providence because judgment is not executed speedily. The argument which follows is from the perfections of the creature to those of the Creator. The very nature of God and of man convicts these fools of their folly. "Can anything," says Herder, "more to the point be urged, even in our time, against the tribe of philosophers who deny a purpose and design in

nature? All that they allege of the dead abstraction which they term 'nature,' the heathen ascribed to their gods; and what the prophets say against the one, holds against the other." P.

9. We can understand the mechanism of the eye, we can comprehend the wisdom that devised it; but the preparation of materials and the adjustment of parts speak of a power and skill to which man can never hope to attain. When he sees his most cunning workmanship surpassed both in plan and execution, shall he fail to recognize design? Shall we fail to recognize a builder when we contemplate such a work? *P. A. Chadbourne.*

10. He that teacheth man knowledge. What knowledge have we but that which is derived from Himself or from the external world?—and what is that world, but His creation?—and what is creation, but the composition, structure, and arrangement of all things according to his previous designs, plans, intentions, will, and mandate? In studying creation in any of its departments, we therefore study His mind; and all that we can learn from it must be His ideas, His purposes, and His performances. No author, in his compositions, no artificer, in his mechanisms, can more truly display their talents and ideas to others than the unseen Creator manifests His thoughts and intelligence to us in the systems and substances which He has formed, and presents to our continual contemplation. In this sense nature is an unceasing revelation of them to us. *Sharon Turner.*

It was no limited power that could make this eye to see, this ear to hear, this heart to understand; and if that eye which He hath given us can see all things that are within our prospect, and that ear that He hath planted can hear all sounds that are within our compass, and that heart that He hath given us can know all matters within the reach of our comprehension; how much more shall the sight, and hearing, and knowledge of that Infinite Spirit, which can admit of no bounds, extend to all the actions and events of all the creatures that lie open before Him that made them! *Bishop H.*

He that teaches man knowledge, shall He not know? He not only as the God of nature has given the light of reason, but as the God of grace has given the light of revelation, has showed man what is true wisdom and understanding; and He that does this, shall He not know? (Job 28: 23, 28). The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fulness of the fountain. If all knowledge is *from God*, no

doubt all knowledge is *in* God. From this general doctrine of God's omniscience He not only confutes the atheists, who said, "*The Lord shall not see* (v. 7), He will not take cognizance of what we do;" but awakens us all to consider that God will take cognizance even of what we think (v. 11). *The Lord knows the thoughts of man.* H.

11. The Psalmist was going to say at the end of v. 10, "Shall not He know?" finishing his question as the preceding verses, but instead of that he gives the answer directly in v. 11. So far from "not seeing," "not regarding," as these "brutish" persons fondly imagine, Jehovah reads their inmost thoughts and devices, as He reads the hearts of all men, even though for a time they are unpunished. P.

Vanity. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercise of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man, the intellectual part, his *thoughts*. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "thoughts" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest: even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. Yet even these most serious exercises of the intellectual faculty "the Lord knoweth to be vanity." *A. Fuller.*—Thoughts are the firstborn of the soul, the immediate issues of the mind: yet we lavish them away upon every trifle. Follow men all the day long and take account of their thoughts. What madness and folly are in all the musings they are conscious of: "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." If we did judge as God judges, all the thoughts, reasonings, discourses of the mind, if they were set down in a table, we might write at the bottom, Here is the sum and total account of all—nothing but vanity. *Manton.*

12. Suddenly the course of thought changes. Such outrageous wickedness and persecution of the good has some indirect benefits. It may be turned to some account as discipline for the pious sufferer. "Blessed is the man, O Lord, whom Thou chastenest, and at the same time *teachest him out of Thy law*"—sustaining his heart by Thy precious truth, and giving him hope for the latter end. C.

Not only knowledge, but also every other gift which we call the gifts of fortune, have

power to puff up earth; afflictions only level these mole-hills of pride, plough the heart, and make it fit for wisdom to sow her seed and for grace to bring forth her increase. Happy is that man, therefore, both in regard of heavenly and earthly wisdom, that is thus wounded to be cured, thus broken to be made straight; thus made acquainted with his own imperfections, that he may be perfected. *Bacon.*—Afflictions of themselves, though severe schoolmasters, yet can do us no good, unless God come by His Spirit and *teach* our hearts inwardly. Let us therefore pray, that, as in the ministry of God's Word, so also of His works and judgments, we may be *all taught of God*. The reason that many men have rather grown worse by their afflictions than better, is because God's Spirit hath not gone with the affliction to put life and spirit into it. *D. Dyke.*

The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for our instruction, reformation, and improvement. When the teachings of the Word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence, they then both bespeak men blessed and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption and means of sanctification. When we are chastened we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of Providence. It is not the chastening itself that does good, but the teaching that goes along with it and is the exposition of it. God *therefore* teaches His people by their troubles, that He may prepare them for deliverance and so give them rest from their troubles; that being reformed they might be relieved, and the affliction having done its work may be removed. H.

If by outward afflictions thy soul be brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless thy afflictions are in love. All the chastening in the world, without Divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; the man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessening, is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon thee, shall teach thee how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to thy self-interest more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of thy

death, thy afflictions are in love. When God loves, He afflicts in love. *T. Brooks.*

It is only in the Word of God that we learn to consider affliction as a blessing. The utmost which the most refined philosophy can effect is to remove from our sorrows that which is imaginary, to divert the attention from the cause of distress, or to produce a sullen and stoical resignation more like despair than hope. The religion of the Gospel grapples with the evil itself, overcomes it, and transforms it into a blessing. It is by no means included in the promises made to true Christians that they shall be exempt from suffering. On the contrary, chastisement forms a necessary part of that paternal discipline by which our heavenly Father fits His children for their eternal rest in glory. The Psalmist asserts the blessedness of the man who is chastened by the Lord with this qualification as necessary to constitute it a blessing, that he is also instructed in Divine truth. By this we understand that the influence of chastisement is not physical; that mere suffering has no inherent efficacy; but that the afflictions of this life are, in the hand of God, instrumental in impressing Divine truth upon the heart, awakening the attention of the believer to the consideration of his own character and situation, the promises of the Gospel, and the rewards of heaven. The child of God is assured that all things work together for his good; in this is plainly included the pledge that chastisements and afflictions shall eventually prove a blessing; and this is verified by the experience of the whole Church. Particularly, chastisement is useful, because it convinces the believer of his helplessness and misery when left to himself, and of his entire dependence on God; because it leads him to renew his repentance, puts his faith to the test, and strengthens his Christian graces; because it contributes to the exercise of filial submission, and fixes the mind upon the heavenly inheritance. *J. W. A.*

The end of our spiritual Father, in all our chastisements, is to make us "partakers of His holiness." Who that knows what it is to be holy, but will rejoice in this end of the Divine discipline? To be made like to God, to be beautified with the graces of His own image, what a high and exalted design is this! And such is the effect of His chastisements. They wean the Christian from the world, they turn his mind back to Him who made it, they take him off from self-will, they break the perverseness which clings to the fallen heart. "My soul," says the Psalmist, "is even as a weaned child," humbled within me, no longer meddling

with things too high for me: quieted, calmed, composed; saying with the prophet, "What I know not, teach Thou me;" "If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." *R. Hall.*

Through suffering to glory; to eternity this remains the fundamental law under which we live on earth. *Suffering trains for glory.* God deals with His chosen ones as the diamond-polisher with the precious stone which he handles, so that the dust is separated from it on all sides, but only that thus it may shine the brightest jewel in a kingly crown. *Suffering is changed into glory*, even as the shadow is swallowed up in light and death in life. Glorious Gospel which lets fall so comforting a light in the dark depths. Glad prospect for so many who here daily sow with tears, yet as certainly may count upon a harvest with rejoicing! *Van O.*

The highest felicity that outward things can bring us is when they come in the guise of sorrow, with the errand of chastening from our Father. Polished steel needs much friction. The fair statue needs much merciless hammering away of lumps which, though they be marble, obscure the likeness. June roses are the children of February's sleet. And the world that we live in to-day has been made ready for men by tremendous convulsions and chaos. And so God deals with us all, moulding us for His purposes by sharp blows; polishing us for His quiver by painful friction; making us fruitful by many a storm; and preparing us to be the dwelling-place of Himself, by many an earthquake throe and much chaos and darkness. Let us accept the gift as part of the benediction of heaven. So all comes to this. If we will trust God, will fear Him, will dwell with Him, will aspire after Him, will bring our sins to Him to be forgiven, if we will regulate our lives and our hearts by His gracious and sweet law, if we will take His chastisements as His love gifts, and say, "It is the Lord!" then, whatever happens, we shall not be desolate. *A. M.*

13. To give him rest. This is the end of God's teaching, that His servant may wait in patience, unmoved by, safe from, the days of evil, seeing the evil all round lifting itself up, but seeing also the secret, mysterious retribution slowly but surely accomplishing itself. In this sense the "rest" is the rest of a calm, self-possessed spirit. *P.*

Rest from the days of adversity. To rest from the days of adversity is not to be disturbed by them to such an extent as to murmur or despond in spirit, but to trust in God,

and in silence of the mind and affections expect from God deliverance. *Venema.*—It is not the will of God to give us more troubles than will bring us to live by faith simply on Him; He loves us too well. *Romaine.*

Whatever may be the longing of the natural heart, and whatever may be the teachings of the most widely popular of false religions, in the direction of a selfish, ease-giving rest, the whole spirit of the Gospel of Jesus breathes of the gain and of the duty of suffering; while all the Gospel precepts and all the Gospel illustrations in this sphere indicate that the "rest" which is given on earth to the Christian believer, is a rest while in suffering, rather than a rest from suffering. "It behooved Christ to suffer;" "leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps." And "as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," even "so also are ye (partakers) of the comfort" which is in and from Christ, in His triumph over evil. He who promises "rest" to all who will come to Him, promises them "tribulation" also; and Christ's conditional promise of eternal rest is, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." Contentment and endurance in suffering are the privilege and the duty of every true disciple of Jesus. And as are the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus so are the teachings of the highest and noblest experiences of the children of men. There is a gain in suffering. True rest is not in unthinking ease. Only through prolonged endurance is there any real attainment of a worthy soul-enjoyment. H. C. T.

The essence of Christianity is self-renunciation; and the discipline that brings us to feel our childlike dependence is the perfecting of our piety. Grief after grief brings us to joy. Broken in spirit, we are made whole; humbled, we are exalted. We gain the great victory through a succession of defeats. It is in the Lord that we must "rest," and it is for His Almighty will that we must "wait." Any other rest will be guilty indolence; any other waiting will be faithless self-love. It must be a religious repose. It must be that holy and consecrated frame in which every subdued and submissive energy shall breathe the consistent prayer, "Thy will be done." This will be casting all our care on Him who careth for us. This will be the peace and joy of believing. F. D. H.

How needful amid the trials of this earthly life, and how blessed is it to look off from the low plane, and past the near horizon of earth and time, to the higher, wider heavens with

their juster standards and clearer lights and unsetting glories, that thus we may learn to judge aright of the events around us, and of the influences that are passing over us. Earthly trial, however sharp and however long, is not hopeless or endless, or even aimless, if accepted as the appointment of a parental Providence, and as training and meeting us for rest in Jesus. *William R. Williams.*

15. Upright in heart. While religion and prosperity go together, it is hard to say which a man follows; but when once they are forced to a separation, where the heart was will soon be manifest. The upright in heart are like Ruth; whatsoever cometh of the Gospel, they will be sharers with it in the same condition; be it affliction or be it prosperity; be it comfort or be it sorrow; be it fair weather or be it foul; be it light or be it darkness—they will take their lot with it. *Caryl.*

18. Thy mercy held me up. We have come to see the beauty of law, and to know that the broken heart, the dying babe, the crucified Christ—all these things come as much out of the Divine love as the flowering spring, the yellow harvest, the marriage-day, and the birth of the firstborn. We believe that God is the merciful Giver to man of bitterness, as well as of what men call bliss; we believe that when we are sad He is as near to us as when we are glad; we believe that He is equally the Author of what men call evil as He is of happiness; that all is of God, all in God. And we rise at last, not in pride, but in humility, to say, Where each man is at this moment is best for his eternal gain, the world's eternal good, and the unbroken purposes of the Almighty. Does it require little faith and courage to hold this creed? It requires more humility, more faith, more courage. *G. Dawson.*

19. Thoughts, or "perplexities;" literally, *divided* or *branching* thoughts," whether doubts or cares. P.—There is a graphic little picture in those words. They mean literally, "in the multitude of my *tangled* or *intertwined* thoughts," a confused mass of thoughts like the interlacing twigs and boughs of a tree swept by a tempest. His thoughts are too confused to think out anything. That suggests a common feature of sorrow. When a great calamity has overtaken one, the first experience, and a dreadful one it is, is that of utter confusion, of inability to think connectedly at all. It is there, amid the multitude of tangled, conflicting thoughts, that he finds healing if he can get hold on God. It is a comfort if he can only realize that God is in the dark with him.

He does not trouble himself much about the mode of the comfort. He merely clings to God and finds the more comfort the closer he gets to Him. V.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me. When I am tossed to and fro with various reasonings, distractions, questionings, and forebodings, I will fly to my true rest, for "*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" From my sinful thoughts, my vain thoughts, my sorrowful thoughts, my griefs, my cares, my conflicts, I will hasten to the Lord; He has Divine comforts, and these will not only console, but delight me. S.—It is still true that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," and that "through much tribulation" we enter the kingdom. But all this is *not a matter of chance*, nor an indication of imperfect wisdom and love. The world is evil, and goodness can only live in it by conflict. It is part of the great battle of the universe that sin shall be exterminated by endured sorrows. History proves that the purest lives and most beautiful virtues have flourished in times and by means of severe trial. Every sufferer knows how blessed it is to be driven nearer to God. The tribulation is only for a brief space, and works out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Hence faith can bear the strain; the more so as God does succor and delight the soul with His comforts. *Chapman.*

We are to understand *here* such comforts as are peculiarly and altogether God's, such as flow at once from God. The comforts that we get from His attributes—from meditating on, and what we call realizing them; the comforts we get from His promises—believing and hoping in Him; and the comforts of His presence, He drawing near to our souls and shining into them—we knowing He is near us, conscious of it by the light and happiness and renewed strength within us. "*Thy comforts*"—the comforts we get from the Lord Jesus Christ; from looking at Him, considering Him; thinking of His person, and offices, and blood, and righteousness, and intercession, and exaltation, and glory, and His second coming; our meet-

ing Him, seeing Him, being like Him. "*Thy comforts*"—the comforts which come from the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter;" when He opens the Scriptures to us, or speaks through ceremonies and ordinances, or witnesses within us of our adoption of God; shining in on His own work of grace in our hearts; enabling us to see that work, and to see in it God's peculiar, eternal love to us; not opening to us the book of life, and showing us our names there, but doing something that makes us almost as joyful as though that book were opened to us; showing us the hand of God in our own souls—His converting, saving hand—His hand apprehending us as His own; making us feel, as it were, His grasp of love, and feel, too, that it is a grasp which He will never loosen. *C. Bradley.*

20-23. This strophe, like the last, applies the general doctrine of the Psalm to the individual case, the personal security of the Psalmist, and the righteous retribution visited upon the evil-doers. But for "*Jehovah my God,*" in v. 22, we have in v. 23, "*Jehovah our God,*" as if to remind us that His personal welfare does not stand apart from, but is bound up with, that of the nation. Compare v. 14. P.

20. Judges and magistrates ought to exercise their authority as God's vicegerents, so that in this their unrighteousness they might seem to be claiming God Himself as their ally. *Bunsen.*

23. God interposes in a special manner, and cuts short the career of tyrants while they are in the very midst of their crimes. Wicked men are often arrested by the pursuivants of Divine justice redhanded, with the evidences of their guilt upon them. "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness.*" While the ill-gotten wedge of gold is yet in their tent judgment overtakes them. God Himself conspicuously visits them, and reveals His own power in their overthrow, "*yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.*" Here, then, the matter ends; faith reads the present in the light of the future, and ends her song without a trembling note. S.

PSALM XCV.

- 1 O COME, let us sing unto the LORD :
Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our
salvation.
- 2 Let us come before his presence with thanks-
giving,
Let us make a joyful noise unto him with
psalms.
- 3 For the LORD is a great God,
And a great King above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth ;
The heights of the mountains are his also.
- 5 The sea is his, and he made it ;
And his hands formed the dry land.
- 6 O come, let us worship and bow down ;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker :
- 7 For he is our God,

- And we are the people of his pasture, and
the sheep of his hand.
To-day, Oh that ye would hear his voice !
- 8 Harden not your heart, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilder-
ness :
 - 9 When your fathers tempted me,
Proved me, and saw my work.
 - 10 Forty years long was I grieved with *that* gen-
eration,
And said, It is a people that do err in their
heart,
And they have not known my ways :
 - 11 Wherefore I swear in my wrath,
That they should not enter into my rest.

THIS Psalm is one of a series intended for the temple worship. Both the joyfulness of its opening verses and its general character, in which it resembles the eighty-first Psalm, would render it suitable for some of the great national feasts. As to the date of its composition nothing certain can be said. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in making a quotation from the Psalm, uses the expression "in David," but this is evidently only equivalent to saying "in the Psalms." In the Hebrew it has no inscription. P.

We may think of this Psalm, as we sing it in our daily worship, as prophetic of a better worship still, even of the perpetual adoration of that heavenly city, wherein the apostle saw no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." *Housman.*

It consists of two very distinct parts: The first is an invitation to a joyful public acknowledgment of God's mercies (vs. 1-7). The second (beginning with the last member of v. 7 to the end) is a warning to the people against the unbelief and disobedience through which their fathers had perished in the wilderness. P.

1. *Come, let us sing unto Jehovah, let us shout unto the rock of our salvation.* The first verb properly means *go*, but is constantly used like *come* in other languages, as a formula of invitation, in summoning others to participate in some act of the speaker. The two verbs in this verse are those commonly applied to the vocal expression of joy and triumph. *The rock of our*

salvation, the strong ground of our confidence, the basis upon which our hope of safety rests. A.

2. *Go to meet.* Such is the proper and strict rendering of the word. "Come before" does not sufficiently express the forwardness, the ready alacrity, which are really denoted by the verb. P.

3-7. The adorableness of God is based upon a threefold fact: He is exalted above all gods as King, above all things as Creator, above His people as Shepherd and Leader. D.—He is called King of kings, and Lord of lords, having none above Him: "A great King above all gods;" needing no license from any when to act, nor direction how to act, nor assistance in His action. He owes not any of those to any person; He was not ordered by any other to create, and therefore receives not orders from any other to rule over what He hath created. He received not His power and wisdom from another, and therefore is not subject to any for the rule of His government. He only made His own subjects, and from Himself hath the sole authority; His own will was the cause of their being, and His own will is the director of their actions. He is not determined by His creatures in any of His motions, but determines the creatures in all. His actions are not regulated by any law without Him, but by a law within Him, the law of His own nature. It is impossible He can have any rule without Himself, because there is nothing superior to Himself. *Charnock.*

This being a Gospel Psalm, it is the Lord Jesus whom we are here taught to praise ; he *is a great God* ; the Mighty God is one of His titles, and *God over all, blessed forevermore*. As Mediator He is *a great King above all gods* ; by Him kings reign, and angels, principalities, and powers are subject to Him ; *by Him*, as the Eternal Word, *all things were made*, and it was fit He should be the Restorer and Reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all (Col. 1 : 16, 20). To Him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into His hand all things are delivered. H.

4. The untrodden heights of the mountains are all the Lord's. These are His fastnesses and treasure-houses, where He stores the tempest and the rain ; whence also He pours the ice-torrents and looses the avalanches. The granite peaks are His, and His the precipices and the beetling crags. Strength is the main thought which strikes the mind when gazing on those vast ramparts of cliff which front the raging sea, or peer into the azure sky, piercing the clouds, but it is to the devout mind the strength of God. S.

5. The Psalmist names the lowest known localities and the highest, to give definiteness to the conception that God holds all alike in His great hand. "The sea and the dry land," another comprehensive grouping, to signify all there is of the earth's surface. Honor ye the glorious Maker of all ! C.

The sea is His. We thank God for the sea. Without it earth would be barrenness, and waste, and without inhabitants. Not an acre could be cultivated and not a creature live. This great wide sea holds large place, and is appointed to high functions in the physical and moral economy of our globe. It must temper our climate, refresh our soil, furnish a way for the going and coming of the nations, bear the traffic of the world, and bind the distant and dissevered tribes of man into a common brotherhood. It has a higher mission. Man is to be trained, disciplined, educated. He is here not simply to contend with elements and adverse conditions, and so become courageous and strong, but he is here to be made intelligent, virtuous, and happy. He is here to see God and serve Him ; and nowhere can he see God in such awful grandeur and sublimity as on the sea. No lessons of human weakness and dependence are so impressed upon men as by the ocean. This liquid wonder, with its wide acres of barrenness, on which no cities can be built, no roadways projected, no foot of traveller pass, with a volume of water outweighing the solid land

of our globe, laid away in depths still unfathomed, with light and life penetrating to its profoundest deep, its liquid tombs, its unseen storehouse, in which the spoils of the ages are gathered, abides in all generations one of the grandest revelations of the Creator's handiwork and a perpetual symbol of the Infinite. *Beadle.*

6, 7. Most of the Psalms are direct addresses to God. The rest of them are devout meditations upon the Divine Word, and the blessedness of those who receive it into their hearts, or varied expressions of spiritual life arising from the most intimate and inspiring relations with God, and suitable to the sanctuary. The central and ruling idea of the whole is *worship* in its most comprehensive sense, and is here embodied in a single impressive sentence. *De Witt.*

6. **O come.** Again the invitation to lowliest adoration and worship, called forth afresh by the remembrance of God's revelation to and covenant with Israel. **Our Maker**, and (v. 7) **our God**, thus asserting the personal covenant relationship of God to His people ; and here, as so often elsewhere, God's majesty as seen in creation is linked with His love as seen in redemption. P.

Let us worship. Worship comes of reverence, the most august and profound of man's capacities, because it reaches instantly from his humblest self-distrust to the loftiest sufficiency, laying the trembling arm of his infirmity on the Almighty throne. Without worship manhood is dwarfed, for it ignores the only supreme intelligence, the only irresistible power, the only infinite love, the Highest, the Greatest, the Best One ; and he who ought to open out on every side of him, by every breathing pore of his constitution, and every thirsty passion of his immortality, toward the boundless realm that encompasses, invites, and waits to transfigure him, shrinks self-limited. F. D. H.

Worship should be the homage of the soul ; its true seat, therefore, is the inner sanctuary of the spirit ; and, whatever the place or the mode of worship, the act itself should correspond with the essence of God, who is Spirit. Our Lord said literally, God is *Spirit* ; not simply a Spirit, but Spirit itself. This infinite Spirit is the Father of our spirits ; and, with the love of a Father for every one of His children alike, He desires from every one the same simple, affectionate, grateful devotion. The truest worship is the communion of our spirits with God. J. P. T.—Spiritual worship is enlightened ; it is the result of knowledge ; it perceives and rejoices in its object ; it takes hold of a promise, or fixes on a precept ; it must be the result of

faith, for faith sees the great Invisible ; it must be the kindling of the Holy Spirit. *Lessey.*—There is no worship where there is no joy. For worship is something more than either the fear of God or the love of Him. It is delight in Him. *F. W. Faber.*

6. Bow down. Adoration is the expression by an outward, but much more by an inward, act of man's sincere conviction that his first duty to Almighty God is submission ; and thus it is distinct from many other acts of the soul which are sometimes apt to be mistaken for it. Thanksgiving, praise, and prayer for blessings, all three differ from adoration in this, that in each of them the soul is less prostrate, more able to bear the thought of self, than in pure and simple adoration. Pure adoration has no heart for self ; it lies silent at the foot of the throne, conscious only of two things—the insignificance of self, the greatness of God. *H. P. L.*

All passions earnestly desire to be freely exercised, especially our holy affections of love, joy, and admiration of Almighty God. In expressing such affections, we naturally desire communion with many. Methinks when we are singing the praises of God in great assemblies with joyful and fervent spirits, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven upon earth, and could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world, and to heaven itself. Nothing comforts me more in my greatest sufferings, nor seems more fit for me, while I wait for death, than singing Psalms of praise to God ; nor is there any exercise in which I had rather end my life. Should I not, then, willingly go to the heavenly choir, where God is praised with perfect love, and joy, and harmony ? Had I more of a praising frame of soul, I should long more for that life of praise. I never find myself more willing to be there than when I most joyfully speak or sing the praises of God. *Baxter.*

We do not only need to worship, we need to perform public and congregational worship. It is of the very nature of all spiritual profits and pleasures that the more and the more widely they are shared, the more they multiply. We need each other in the worship of God. For one thing, we need all community of worship can do for us to keep our religion, which is our life, from the blight of individualism. Our religion is not only and entirely a private matter between each of us and his God. There are priceless results of religion and of worship that we cannot get by ourselves, and our fellow-men cannot get without us. *Cable.*

7. The Gospel Church is His flock, Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it ; we, as Christians, are led by His hand into the green pastures, by Him we are protected and well provided for, to His honor and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to Him must be *glory in the churches* (whether it be in the world or no) *throughout all ages* (Eph. 3 : 21).

7-11. The latter part of this Psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those that sing Gospel Psalms to live Gospel lives and to hear the voice of God's Word ; otherwise, how can they expect that He should hear the voice of their prayers and praises ? *H.*

7. To-day if ye will hear His voice.

Here is the same solemn strain of warning and expostulation breaking in upon the very joy and gladness of the temple worship, as we have already observed in chap. 81 : 6. Psalms like these seem to have had a double purpose. They were not only designed to be the expression of public devotion, the utterance of a nation's supplications and thanksgivings, but they were intended also to teach, to warn, to exhort. Hence, too, the prophetic character which marks them. The Psalmist, like every true preacher, comes as an ambassador from above, speaking not his own words, but the words which God has given him, the words which God Himself has uttered. The warning here rests, as in chaps. 78 and 81, on the example of their fathers in the desert.

To-day, the present moment, as critical and decisive, the day of grace which may be lost. *P.*—Often as they were faithless, the "to-day" sounded ever anew ; for the gifts and calling of God are "without repentance." *Tholuck.*

This Psalm is twice quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a warning to the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, in the writer's day, that they should not falter in the faith, and despise God's promises, as their forefathers had done in the wilderness, lest they should fail of entering into His rest ; see Heb. 3 : 7, where v. 7 of this Psalm is introduced with the words, "As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice," and Heb. 4 : 7, it is said, "Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying *in David*, To-day." *Wordsworth.*—"To-day," in the hour of grace, in the day of mercy, we are tried as to whether we have an ear for the voice of our Creator. Nothing is said of to-morrow, "He limiteth a certain day," He presses for immediate attention, for our own sakes He asks instantaneous obedience. The Holy Ghost saith, To-day ! *S.*

O that ye would hear His voice! That ye would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; like that, *If thou hadst known* (Luke 19 : 42); that is, O that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard *to-day*. While He is speaking to you see that you attend to Him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always; improve it, therefore, *while it is called to-day*. H.—There is no time yours but the present time, no day yours but the present day; therefore, do not please and feed yourselves with hopes of time to come: that you will repent, but not yet; and lay hold on mercy, but not yet. T. Brooks.—If we put off repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in. W. Mason.—He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent. Quarles.—You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late. T. Fuller.

8. God Himself is here abruptly introduced as speaking. A.—**Harden not your heart.** The measure for the Divine estimate of man lies in the uprightness and purity of the attitude of the heart toward God. The Old Testament calls the highest degree of sin *obduracy*, or *hardening* of the heart. This is the condition in which a man, by continually cherishing sin, has [in a sense] lost the ability to withstand it; and it is added, that God can glorify Himself on such a one only by punishment. For it is God's ordinance, that as the power to do good grows by its exercise, so also sin is punished by continued sinning. This hardening is both a *Divine act* and at the same time the *sinner's own act*, so that the two expressions are interchangeable. Oehler.

No matter what fears and anxieties may alarm the soul; no matter what convictions of guilt may harass the conscience; no matter what service may be rendered by the feet, the hands, or the lips, if the heart continue shut to the holy influence of Divine realities, there is, there can be no obedience to a single Divine command. Whatever reason, then, there is in the commands of the living God, why they should now be obeyed, there is all that, why the sinner should no longer harden his heart. Whatever there is in the beaming glories of the Godhead, whatever there is in the claims of a creating God, of an all-providing God, of a redeeming God, whatever there is in the majesty and authority of a reigning God, why His voice should be heard and obeyed to-day, it all combines to enforce the exhortation, "To-day, harden not your hearts." To harden the heart is death to every right feel-

ing, to every holy affection. So long as you harden your heart, you hear not the voice, you break every command of Him that speaketh from heaven. N. W. Taylor.

8, 9. The special point of the exhortation is, Do not make your heart hard by resisting this kind and earnest appeal. God speaks in love; do not repel His kindness and deaden your own moral sensibilities to the ruin of your souls. The example of their fathers in the wilderness is brought before them to augment the force of this appeal. The Hebrew words suggest these historical allusions, and it were better that our English version should do the same, thus: "Harden not your heart as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness." These names were significant, Meribah meaning *strife*; Massah, temptation, with reference to their trying and proving God as if to see how much abuse He would bear. C.—The aggravation of this sin was that they saw God's work; they saw what He had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt; in the bread He rained from heaven for them, and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them; with them even seeing was not believing, because they *hardened their hearts*, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart. H.

10, 11. "I said, a people wanderers in heart are they," the words being an allusion to their wandering over the wilderness. That is, they are not only wanderers over barren hills and dreary wastes, but worse yet, wanderers in heart from truth and duty, from their greatest, best Friend, the God of their broken covenant. "They have not known My ways," not that they have had no means of knowing, but that they had no heart to know. So far as "they knew God they glorified Him not as God," and therefore became only the more lost to virtue and alien from God. Hence God swore in His wrath that that generation should never enter Canaan, their promised land of rest. C.

The curse was not causeless, and it did come. We have an account of its actual fulfilment (Num. 26 : 64, 65). The "rest" from which they were excluded was the land of Canaan. Their lives were spent in wandering. It is termed "God's rest," as there He was to finish His work of bringing Israel into the land promised to their fathers, and fix the symbol of His presence in the midst of them, dwelling in that land in which His people were to rest from their wanderings, and to dwell in safety under His protection. We are by no means warranted to

conclude that all who died in the wilderness came short of everlasting happiness. The curse denounced on them went only to their exclusion from the earthly Canaan. *John Brown.*

11. *They shall not*; literally, "if they shall enter," this elliptical form of the oath being equivalent to a strong negative. **My rest**, strictly "place of settlement," as the abode of God, but used also of the land of promise (Deut. 12 : 9), as a place of *rest* after the wandering in the wilderness. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (4 : 6-9) argues, from the use of the word "to-day" in v. 7, that the language of the Psalm is applicable not merely to the times of the law, but also to the Gospel dispensation; and from the reference to God's rest here, "in David" (*i.e.*, in the Book of Psalms), that Canaan was not the true rest. Joshua, he says, did not bring the people into God's rest, otherwise this warning would have no application. P.—The older generation died in the wilderness, and therefore through their disobedience forfeited the privilege of entering into God's rest. If now, many centuries after Moses, Israel is invited in the Davidic Psalter, with the significant call, "To-day if ye will hear His voice!" and with a reference to the warning example of the fathers, to submissive adoration of Jehovah, it follows that, now as formerly, the obedience of faith has to expect the gracious reward of entering into God's rest, a reward which the disobedient in those days forfeited, and that, consequently, the occupation of Canaan was not yet the final rest. This is the connection of the wider train of thought which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews develops from this passage in the Psalm. D.

Catching up this word *rest*—*God's rest*—contained in the Divine utterance of judgment (as given by the Psalmist), the inspired writer goes on (Heb. 4 : 1) to discourse of the relation in which believers under the Gospel stand to it. He reminds them that they had succeeded to the heritage of promise given in former ages to God's people concerning it; it had come down as an entail of blessing to them, and might now, precisely as of old, be either appropriated by faith or forfeited by unbelief. Not only does he thus connect believers under the Gospel with believers under the law in respect to the promised rest, but the promise itself he connects with the very commencement of the world's history, with that rest of God which He is said to have taken, when He ceased from all His works which He created and made (Gen. 2 : 2). This was emphatically God's rest, the only thing expressly characterized as such in the history of

the Divine dispensations; and the apostle points to it as a noteworthy thing, that while the works from which God is thus said to have rested were finished at the creation of the world, the promise of the land of Canaan should somehow, thousands of years afterward, have been associated with it. Yet he does not (as is too commonly supposed) simply identify the two; while both he and the Psalmist speak of exclusion from Canaan as involving for ancient Israel exclusion from an interest in God's rest, they both also conceive the possibility of having an inheritance in Canaan, and yet wanting a participation in the rest of God. On this account the Psalmist had plied his contemporaries when they *were* in Canaan with the admonition to beware, lest by provoking God they should still lose their interest in God's rest. And now, again, the writer of this epistle, laying hold of the words of the Psalmist repeats the same warning, and calls upon Christians to take good heed, that by steadfastly adhering to the faith and obedience of the Gospel, they should secure their entrance into that rest of God which remains for them, as it has remained for God's people in every age, the blessed result and consummation of a life of faith. P. F.

Rest, not annihilation, as now for many the Gospel of despair announces; not yet unceasing song and praise, as a childish imagination loves to conceive of heaven; but a condition, a region, a personal enjoyment of rest in the deepest and holiest sense of the term. *Sabbath rest*, this is the signification of the original word, such as that which, according to the Divine record, God enjoyed when the work of creation was complete. Godlike Sabbath rest, that is undoubtedly and unspeakably *blessed* rest, from which the eye looks back with calm serenity upon the finished work. It is an unwearied, *active* rest, like that of the Father, who in His rest yet works, since heavenly joy without some occupation would cease to be heaven. It is, finally, a rest *that cannot be disturbed*, like that of God Himself, raised above all the trouble and turmoil of this vain world: "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Thus, the longer we contemplate it, the clearer does heaven appear before our eyes as the land of perfect rest. And the rest *remaineth*. After all the inquietude and the short-lived rest of this life, it is as surely to be expected, as for the faithful Israelites something better was yet in store than the earthly Canaan into which Joshua had led them. Yea, verily, this remains, whatever else fades or removes

from earth. *Van O.*—Perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures; their activity, therefore, being easy, natural, and necessary, as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring, activity to them is rest. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest, not from their works, but only from their labors. It would be a labor for them not to work. To hush their music and to stop their action would be to them intolerable toil; they would be "weary with forbearing and could not stay." So they "rest," yet they rest not day nor night. *Stanford.*

The rest of a soul in God, though infinitely removed from the agitations of the world, and its conflicting and distressing reasonings, is, nevertheless, a state in which the thoughts are active; seeking after God, apprehending Him, appropriating and enjoying Him. The seraphs that adore and burn are intellectual creatures; and we conceive of the saints in heaven as knowing, learning, and putting forth those mental exertions which tend to the perpetual advancement and expansion of their powers. A heaven in which there is no intellectual activity would be no heaven for a rational creature; and it is a gross, though common abuse of the term rest, to apply it to a drowsy, listless, unimproving eternity; though heaven is a rest, it is neither a dream nor a sleep. *J. W. A.*—Rest is not inaction, but liberty; not idleness, but willing and joyous movement forward. Rest is the perfect harmony and fulness of all the energies and affections of the soul, acting together by Him who fills all with His peace. And here we have splendid outlines of what the Christian life hereafter will be. "This is life eternal;" life is action. Heaven will indeed be "rest," but not the rest of doing nothing. It will be intense, ceaseless, glorious work for God, every faculty free, every energy in play, every condition harmonized and every breath thanksgiving. There shall be no night there, because there will be no need of any other repose or recovery or recreation than simply to live in a climate like that, a climate created by the face of the Lord, who is the Everlasting Light. Day and night "they serve Him." Limitation, weariness, failure, suffering, sin are ended. The discords of our cross-purposing and jarring plans, with too much self-seeking in them, our jangling tempers and noisy passions, will be still. A few more of these twilights fading down the walls of the outer heavens that we see, and then the

darkest and weakest mind among us will be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. *F. D. H.*

Material and Moral Uses of the Sea (v. 5).

The sea is as *essential to the life of the world* as the blood is to the life of the human body. Instead of being a waste and desert, it is the thing which keeps the earth itself from becoming a waste and desert. It is the world's fountain of life and health and beauty; and if it were taken away, the grass would perish from the mountains, the forests would crumble on the hills, the harvests would become powder on the plains, and the solid globe itself, scarred and blasted on every side, would swing in the heavens as silent and dead as on the first morning of creation. If it were not for the sea, the entire belt of the tropics would be a desert of perpetual fire, and the entire polar regions would be a desert of perpetual frost. One third of the whole earth's surface would be unendurable with heat, another with cold, and only the remaining third would be fit for human habitation; whereas now, under these tempering influences of the ocean, the whole width of the world, with few exceptions, is given to man for his dwelling; and wherever he goes he finds a thousand forms of vegetable and animal life, which the same genial influence has made to wait upon him and be subservient to him. The sea is a *perpetual source of health to the world*. Without it, there could be no drainage for the lands. The process of death and decay, which is continually going on in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, would soon make the whole surface of the earth one vast receptacle of corruption, whose stagnant mass would breed a pestilence, sweeping away all the life of a continent. The winds would not purify it; for, having no place to deposit the burden, it would only accumulate in their hands, and filling their breath with its poisonous effluvia, it would make them swift ministers of death, carrying the sword of destruction into every part of the world at once. The sea *furnishes the great natural pathways of the world*. Perhaps the first impression in looking upon the sea is that it is a great barrier between the nations; that it puts the continents much further asunder than they would otherwise be; and that thus it acts as an unsocializing force, hindering the intercourse of the world. The truth lies in just the opposite direction. Instead of a barrier, the sea is a road across the barrier; instead of putting the ends of the earth

farther apart, it brings them nearer together ; instead of being an unsocializing and an alienating force between them, it is the surest means of their acquaintance, and the most effectual bond of their fellowship. It does, indeed, draw a decisive boundary around a nation, and keep its main population in on every side. But this is, in itself, a blessing. For boundaries are necessary to give individuality to nations, as they are to give individuality to men. There must be an outline to their personality ; and the firmer that outline is drawn, the greater vigor of character and the deeper intensity of life they are likely to possess. The sea, therefore, first defines a nation to itself, fills it up with the refluxence and reaction of its own proper life ; and then, when it has reached a certain height and fulness, opens the door and lets it forth to find the life of other nations, and feel the brotherhood of the world. Hence, other things being equal, the strongest nations in civilized history have always been the insular or peninsular ones, like England, Italy, and Greece, which, using the sea in the beginning as a separation from other lands, and making it a boundary, a barrier, and a defence, have by it been able so to compress and compact their own energies that they have, at last, become strong enough to burst the ocean barrier that surrounded them, and then to employ the sea itself as an arm of power to reach and subsidize the ends of the earth. Thus that which was at first a wall to bar all further progress, becomes a path of such breadth and permanence and ease of tread as could not have been constructed by all the art and all the strength of man. Hence the ocean has been the great educator of the world. It has furnished the prime stimulus of national energy, and has determined in the beginning and for all time the paths in which all great history must run.

Another office of the sea is to furnish an *inexhaustible storehouse of power for the world*. The two greatest available powers known to man are those of running water and steam ; and both these come out of the sea. And as these two are the greatest, so they are the most enduring powers ; they will last until the rains cease to fall from the clouds, until the forests are hewn from the mountains, and the treasures of coal are all dug from the depths of the earth. A further office of the sea is to be a *vast storehouse of life*. The sea has a whole world of life in itself. It spreads its table, first of all, for its own children, and these other gifts which it makes to the lands, royal and munificent as they are, are but the superfluities and remainders that are left from its table and wardrobe,

after all its own inhabitants are housed and nourished, and clothed and fed. It is said that the life in the sea far exceeds all that exists out of it. There are more than twenty-five thousand distinct species of living beings that inhabit its waters. It is one of the noble uses of the sea that it furnishes the dwelling-place for such an inconceivable immensity of life. It is even more full of God's goodness than it is of His power ; for in every drop of inhabited sea water there is literally a whole continent of happy beings that draw their existence from God, wait upon Him for food, and receive their daily sustenance at His hand.

The last use of the sea may be called the *geological* one. It brings into sight the impressive element of time, and sends us back to that gigantic history of the past when the forces of the sea, which are now in comparatively feeble play, were set to their Titanic task, and wrought out those stupendous results which belong to the very framework of nature itself, and which will endure till the very substance of the globe is dissolved. God has appointed the sea to be the architect of the world. It has quarried the materials and brought them to their place, and then with its building tool and dressing hammer it has given them shape, and piled them, layer above layer, for the walls of the great house of life. There is the clearest evidence that every part of the known earth has been, successively and for unnumbered ages, under the dominion of the sea. When the cooling crust of the globe had become one unbroken sphere of granite rock, then the waters were let in upon it by Jehovah's hand, to join, with fire and frost and moving ice, and all the forces of the volcano and the earthquake, in tearing asunder this quarry of the continents ; disintegrating, grinding, pulverizing, and sifting, till the sands and limes and clays and various earths were separated from their rocky prison, assorted each after its kind, carried a thousand miles by mighty currents, spread out over the bottom of the deep, cemented firmly in their place by pressure, heat, and inward chemistry, piled story above story, till they were many thousands and many ten thousands of feet in thickness ; and so the great house of the world being built and finished and furnished beneath the sea, with endless stores of all things needful—coal, and iron, and marble, and copper, and gold—it felt the uplifting hand of God, and rose into the sky, parting the ocean from pole to pole, a mighty continent, with mountain, and valley, and river, and plain, soon green and golden, from side to side, with grass and grain,

and forest and flower ; a house not made with hands, high as the heavens, deep as the centre, wide as the firmament, bright as the light ; a glorious habitation, waiting for the footstep, the eye, and the voice of its great coming master—man.

"*The sea is His*," says the Psalmist ; and we may take the emphasis of that assertion as if it meant that in some sense He claimed exclusive possession of the sea ; that He gave the land to man, but in a manner reserved the ocean as His own domain. And it is so. Man's dominion is the solid land. There he rears his habitation, hews down the forests, upturns the hills, fills the valleys, spreads his waving harvests, lays his roads of stone and iron like net-work across a whole continent, plants cities that last for thousands of years. All that is within the compass of the land is given to his dominion, and he shall subdue its strength and appropriate its treasure, and scatter the refuse of it as the dust beneath his feet. But there man's empire stops. God has given the land to man, but the sea He has reserved to Himself : "*the sea is His*, and He made it." He has given man "no inheritance in it ; no, not so much as to set his foot on." If he enters its domain, he enters it as a pilgrim and a stranger. He may pass over it, but he can have no abiding place upon it. He cannot build his house, nor so much as pitch his tent within it. He cannot mark it with his lines, nor subdue it to his uses, nor rear his monuments upon it. Its vastness, loneliness, and the impossibility of its subjugation by man set it apart from the secular aspect that belongs to the rest of the world, and consecrate it as the peculiar possession and dwelling-place of the Most High. Like some vast builded temple, it perpetually speaks of Him and for Him. It bodies forth His immensity. It represents eternity. Girded round all the lands, as death is girded around all life, it seems to bring the unseen world to our vision, and to sound and shine with the glory and the awfulness of that state which is beyond the grave. Travelling out into its vastness, we seem to be moving beyond the boundaries of space and time. Sailing on, day after day, without any apparent progress, never reaching the horizon that is before, never leaving the horizon that is behind, it is as if we had lost all connection with the earth which we inhabit, and were voyaging upon the infinite expanse of the skies, travelling to some world that lies beyond the stars of heaven. We look at the stars by night, and they seem to be nearer to us, and to be gazing upon us with longing eyes, and with a more fixed and solemn earnestness.

We look at the track of the ship, and it is a wake of sparkling fires, as if our bark had left at length the seas of earth behind it, and were sailing over the ocean of the firmament. We have forgotten time ; we are thinking of eternity. We have forgotten man ; we are thinking of God. The bondage of the senses is dissolved, and the things that are beyond them come breaking into our being. We feel as if we saw the very fields of immensity and eternity, and held within our grasp the lines that bound us to another life. And it is this which gives the sea its mystery and might ; that it is fraught with these Divine elements ; that it is charged with these spiritual suggestions ; that it is the symbol of eternity and infinity, and crowds upon us, with irresistible majesty, the vision of that life unseen, and those worlds unknown, for which our souls are made, and to which the feet of every one of us are swiftly and irreversibly travelling. There is a sea within us which responds to the sea without. Deep calleth unto deep, and it is the answer and the yearning of these inward waves, in reply to that outward call, which makes our hearts to swell, our eyes to grow dim with tears, and our whole being to lift and vibrate with such strong emotion when we stand upon the shore and look out upon the deep, or sit in the stern of some noble ship and feel ourselves cradled on the pulsations of its mighty bosom. There is a life within us which calls to that sea without, a conscious destiny which only *its* magnitude and *its* motion can symbolize and utter.

And so, by its material uses and its spiritual voices, does the sea ever speak to us to tell us that its builder and maker is God. He hewed its channels in the deep, and drew its barriers upon the sand, and cast its belted waters around the world. He fitted it to the earth and the sky, and poised them skilfully the one against the other when He "measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." He gave the sea its wonderful laws, and armed it with its wonderful powers, and set it upon its wonderful work.

"O'er all its breadth His wisdom walks,
On all its waves His goodness shines."

Let us give thanks, therefore, for the sea. Let us remember Him that gave it such vast dominion, and made it to be not only the dwelling-place of His awful presence, but the beautiful garment of His love and the mighty instru-

ment of His goodness. Let it speak to us of His unfathomable fulness. Let it teach us that He has made nothing in vain. Let it remind us that the powers of destruction and death are under His control, and that behind the cloud of darkness and terror that often invests them, they are working out immeasurable results of blessing and life for the future time, for distant regions and for coming generations. Let it lead us to confide in Him who "ruleth the raging of the seas, who stilleth the noise of their waves and the tumult of the people;" who has all the

forces of the world at His control, and all the ages of time at His command; who knows how to build His kingdom beneath the sea of human opposition, as He built the continents beneath the ocean waters; who makes all the powers of dislocation and decay yield to that kingdom some element of strength or richness; and who, when the appointed hour shall come, will lift it irresistibly above the waves, and set its finished beauty beneath the heavens, with the spoils of all time gathered upon its walls, and the nations of the saved walking in its glory. *Swain.*

PSALM XCVI.

- 1 O SING unto the LORD a new song :
Sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
- 2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name ;
Shew forth his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples.
- 4 For great is the LORD, and highly to be
praised :
He is to be feared above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols
[*things of nought*] :
But the LORD made the heavens.
- 6 Honour and majesty are before him :
Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the peo-
ples,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
- 8 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his
name :

- Bring an offering, and come into his
courts
- 9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holi-
ness :
Tremble before him, all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations, The LORD reigneth :
The world also is established that it cannot
be moved :
He shall judge the peoples with equity.
- 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth
rejoice ;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ;
- 12 Let the field exult, and all that is therein ;
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for
joy ;
- 13 Before the LORD, for he cometh :
For he cometh to judge the earth :
He shall judge the world with righteous-
ness,
And the peoples with his truth.

THIS grand prophetic Psalm looks forward with joyful certainty to the setting up of a Divine kingdom upon earth. But it is only indirectly Messianic. It connects the future blessings, not with the appearance of the Son of David, but with the coming of Jehovah. There are in the Old Testament two distinct lines of prophecy, culminating in these two advents. Their convergence and ultimate unity are only seen in the light of New Testament fulfilment. The same hopes, however, gather about both, as may be seen, for instance, by a comparison of this Psalm with such a passage as Isa. 11 : 1-9. P.

The present Psalm is a *millennial* anthem. It accords with the condition of the world when Christ shall sit enthroned in the willing loyalty of our race. The nations join in an acclaim of praise to Him as their rightful Judge and King. There is a unanimity in the song, as if it ascended from a world purged into a temple of holiness, and whose inhabitants were indeed a royal priesthood, with one heart to make Jesus king, with one voice to sound forth one peal of melody in praise of the name above every name. It holds true to the deepest principles of our nature, that what we contemplate as possible, much more what we anticipate as cer-

tain, lends us the very hope and energy conducive to its realization. On the contrary, despair paralyzes effort. Is it on this account that everywhere in prophecy, old and new, there floats before us the ideal of a recovered and rejoicing world, at times transfigured into a loftier scene, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? Our earth may be in ruins meanwhile, blackness on the sky, barrenness on the soil, because sin is everywhere; but a change is promised. What we hope for, we labor for all the more that our hope is no dream of fancy, but has its basis in the science and certainty of absolute truth. "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61 : 11). In this holy Psalm, the Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all, trains us to the utterance of a song suitable to seasons of millennial glory, when the Moloch of oppression, the Mammon of avarice, the Ashtaroth of fiery lust, every erring creed, every false religion, shall have given place to the worship of the one true and living God—to the faith and love of Christ. "Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee." *W. H. Gould.*

1-3. A summons to the people of Jehovah to sing praise unto its God, repeated three times, and to evangelize the heathen. The new song presupposes a new state of affairs, while the summons to sing the new song presupposes a present, which had the appearance of being such a beginning of this new state as guaranteed its realization, the beginning, viz., of the recognition of Jehovah throughout the whole Gentile world, and of His accession to lordship over the whole earth. The new song is an echo of the revelation of redemption and glory that is making a way for itself in history; and this revelation is also the inexhaustible material of the joyful tidings that are proclaimed from day to day. **D.**—The new song is not the Psalm itself, but one which shall be the fit expression of all the thoughts and hopes and triumphs of the new and glorious age which is about to dawn. It is the glad welcome given to the King when He enters His kingdom. Compare with this verse Isa. 42 : 10 ; 60 : 6 ; 66 : 19. **P.**

A new song. The old song is the song of creation; the new is the song of salvation. **M.**—"A new song," unknown to you before. Come, all ye nations of the wide earth, who up to this hour have been giving your worship to dead gods that were no gods at all; come and

give your hearts to the true and only God in this new song! **C.**

Three times we are here called to *sing unto the Lord*; sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost; as it was *in the beginning*, when *the morning stars sang together*, is now, in the Church militant, and *ever shall be* in the Church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often reminded of it and stirred up to it. *Sing unto the Lord*—that is, "*Bless His name*, speak well of Him, that you may bring others to think well of Him." *Sing a new song*, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. A new song is a song for new favors, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a New Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old or vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date. **H.**

2. From day to day. Salvation is a fit subject for unceasing praise. Every man should praise God every day—on each returning morning and on every evening—for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and that he may be happy forever. If we had right feelings, this would be the first thought which would burst upon the mind each morning, irradiating as with sunbeams all around us; and it would be the last thought which would linger in the soul as we lie down at night and close our eyes in slumber, making us grateful, calm, happy, as we sink to rest, for whether we wake or not in this world we may be forever happy. *Barnes.*—Each day brings us deeper experience of our saving God, each day shows us anew how deeply men need His salvation, each day reveals the power of the Gospel, each day the Spirit strives with the sons of men; therefore, never pausing, be it ours to tell out the glorious message of free grace. **S.**

3. The use of *glory*, to denote the special manifestation of God's attributes, is a characteristic feature of Isaiah's later prophecies. To preclude all doubt as to the extent of the invitation, the ambiguous expression *all the earth*, in v. 1, is here explained to mean *the nations*, and then still more absolutely *all the peoples*. **A.**

Declare His wonders. What a wonderful person He is, God manifest in the flesh; what wonderful love He has shown in His incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; what amazing miracles He wrought, and what a

wonderful work He performed ; the work of our redemption, the wonder of men and angels ; declare His wonderful resurrection from the dead, His ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and intercession for His people ; the wonderful effusion of His Spirit, and the conquests of His grace, and the enlargement of His kingdom in the world ; as also what wonders will be wrought by Him when He appears a second time ; how the dead will be raised, and all will be judged ! *Gill.*

5. *For all the gods of the nations are nothings, and Jehovah the heavens did make. Nothings,* nonentities, a favorite description of idols in Isaiah's later prophecies. The contrast intended is extreme and absolute. He called the world into existence ; they do not even exist themselves. A.—Their Elohim are *elilim*. The word *elilim* occurs in two places in the Psalms, here and 97 : 7. It is used most frequently by Isaiah, and properly signifies *nothings* ; as Paul says, "An idol is nothing." *Chr. Wordsworth.*

Remarkably here, as usually in the Scriptures, the decisive test of true divinity, distinguishing the true God from all false gods, is His *creatorship*. Your heathen gods are mere *nothings* (the sense of the Hebrew word for "idols"), but Jehovah, our God, built the heavens. Compare Psalm 95 : 5 and Jer. 10 : 11, 12, 16. Ought He not then to be feared and worshipped, high above all gods ? C.

6. *Splendor and majesty are before Him*, in His immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of His glory. *Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary*, both that above and this below. In God there is everything that is awful, and yet everything that is amiable. If we attend Him in His sanctuary we shall behold His beauty, for *God is love*, and experience His strength, for *He is our Rock*. Let us therefore go forth in His strength, enamoured with His beauty. H.

"Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary ;" strength first, beauty afterward ; strength as the basis and support, and beauty as a graceful floral finish and decoration. This is the Divine order in all things. Beauty comes not first, but last. The flowers may perish while the foundations remain, but the foundations cannot perish and the flowers remain. Whatever a Christian be else, he must be strong. Stand he cannot unless there be in him the qualities symbolized in Jachin and Boaz—strength and stability. The world itself has grown from strength to beauty. Just as the pillars were not finished till their capitals bloomed in "lily

work," so must it be with a true human life and character. This is not completed without its capital, a capital which need not be of lily work, but must be the reproduction of some Divine flower. The fruits of the Spirit are the lily work by which, often more than by the sterner virtues of our religion, it is to be commended to the admiration and the faith of others. To despise these graces is to despise the Saviour in whom they were embodied. *Mellor.*

God has in the Bible wedded beauty to truth, and preluded, by the existence of this book, the period when in each soul glory shall crown the sacred work of grace. "Beauty and power," it is said, "are in His sanctuary." *Godet.*

Character-building ought to be temple-building—the framing and adorning of a sanctuary for the indwelling God—a sanctuary in whose firm foundation, massive walls, fair proportions, and rich adornings there should be blended strength and beauty. Nor will the strength suffice for the perfection of character without the beauty. As the beautiful in nature is something more than the useful, so is the beautiful in character something more than the substantially good. This beauty of character you need not only for your own sake, but equally for your social influence, for the good that you may do in the world, which I trust will enter into the life-purpose of every one of you. It is this element of character, more than anything else, that gives goodness its beneficent power. You will do good, less by what you say or do, or even give, than by what you are. *A. P. Peabody.*

The tree that has its firm-fixed root and upright stem has also its spreading branches and thousand waving twigs, which yield to the breeze and salute the gentlest movement of the surrounding air. How beautiful strength is, when it thus melts away at its extremities into kindliness and courtesy ; and how attractive would be firm Christian principle, when it was seen that it could clothe itself with softness and tenderness, and that it rises so powerful and lofty to bear up and spread out all genial affections, like leaves and blossoms, and to have all innocent enjoyments come fluttering like birds to sing among its branches ! "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." *Ker.*

We can give the highest evidence of strength of character when strength is so restrained and controlled as to elaborate itself into beauty. True strength is the strength of faith, and true beauty is the beauty of holiness. Other strength will decay, other beauty will fade ; but this

strength will only grow stronger and this beauty more beautiful as eternity shall roll on. *M. Hopkins.*

Beauty and strength come from communion with God. If you want to be pure and good, noble and gentle, sweet and tender; if you desire to be delivered from your own weaknesses and selfish, sinful idiosyncrasies, the way to secure your desire is, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." There is no influence to refine and beautify men like that of living near Jesus Christ and walking in the light of that beauty which is the effulgence of the Divine glory and the express image of His person. And in like manner as beauty, so strength comes from communion with God, and laying hold on Him. The two poles of perfectness in humanity, so often divorced from one another, beauty and strength, have one common source, and depend for their loftiest position upon one thing. God possesses both in supremest degree, being the Almighty and the all-fair; and we possess them in limited, but yet possibly progressive measure, through dependence upon Him. The true force of character, and the true power for work, and every real strength which is not only weakness, comes on condition of our keeping close by God. It is safe for us to leave all thoughts of our miserable selves behind us if instead of them we have the thought of that great, sweet, dear Lord filling mind and heart. "Looking off" from ourselves "unto Jesus" is safe. Self-oblivion comes only from self being swallowed up in the thought of the Lord. *A. M.*

7-9. The families of the nations themselves are called upon to take up the song in which Israel has made known to them the salvation of Jehovah. These three verses are taken partly from Psalm 29 : 1, 2.

7, 8. Give glory. We go into God's courts, it has been truly remarked, to *give* rather than to *get*. This is the principle of all true prayer, ascription rather than petition. *P.*

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. It is a stated rule in Scripture that *respect to God must be proportioned to the nature of God.* God is a *spirit*, therefore will be worshipped in *spirit and truth*. God is a God of *peace*, therefore lift up pure hands, without *wrath and doubting*. God is a *holy God*, therefore will be *sanctified*. They that will glorify and honor God with a glory due to His name must sanctify Him as well as honor Him. For "God is glorious in holiness." This God counteth to be His chief excellency,

and the glory which He will manifest among the sons of men. *Manton.*

This power of giving glory to God assures us that we have fellowship with Him, and that our true work is His. There must be some likeness of nature, or the tribute would be impossible. There must be some community of purpose, or we should not rejoice instinctively in the thought of the Divine omnipotence. And as we exercise the powers which enable us thus to realize a Divine communion they become insensibly more pervading and more energetic. Whoever has cultivated the habit of looking to God and praising Him will have found growing up within himself the vital consciousness of a present Saviour by whose strength and for whom he is working. He will have learned not to be impatient of results, for he knows that we see but little of that which can be seen even on earth, and that the end is not here. He will have ceased to trouble himself as to what God gives him to do, for he feels that the work of God is one, and that all faithful labor contributes to its fulfilment. *Bishop Westcott.*

Bring an offering, and come into His courts. Come with an unbloody sacrifice; atonement for sin having been made, it only remains to bring thank-offerings, and let not these be forgotten. To Him who gives us all, we ought gladly to give our grateful time. When assembling for public worship we should make a point of bringing with us a contribution to His cause, according to that ancient word, "None of you shall appear before Me empty." The time will come when from all ranks and all nations the Lord will receive gifts when they gather together for His worship. *S.*

The Scripture makes it a very material circumstance of worship to approach God's house, to enter into His courts, to come into His presence, to own ourselves His servants and worshippers; and without disparaging private prayers or closet and family devotions, there is no reason to think God will own those for His worshippers who deny Him this public homage. All the promises of the Gospel are originally made to the Christian Church, the body of Christ, and to particular Christians, as members of and in communion with the Christian Church. But those cannot pretend to be in communion with the Church who never communicate with it; and those who live in communion with the Church, and serve God in His house as oft as opportunity will permit, may expect a gracious return to their private prayers, which are offered to God in the name of Christ and in the com-

munion of the Church ; but this is no encouragement to those who set up private devotions against public worship. *W. Sherlock.*

9. If thou wouldst be faithful to that work that God hath allotted thee to do in this world for His name, then labor to see a beauty and glory in holiness and in every good work ; this tends much to the engaging of thy heart. *Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness !* *Bunyan.*

Shall we call *holiness* an attribute ? Is it not rather the glorious combination of all His attributes ? All are glorious, but in this we have a combination of all into a still more glorious whole. It is for this reason that it is so frequently in Scripture associated with the Divine beauty. The poetic nature of the Psalmist is exalted to ecstasy in contemplation of the "*beauty of holiness*," the "*beauty of the Lord*." Beauty is a combination of elements according to the laws of harmony ; the more beautiful the parts or elements, and the more perfect the harmonious combination, the higher the beauty. How high and glorious, therefore, must be the beauty of this attribute which is the perfect combination of all His infinite perfections ! *J. Le Conte.*

Beauty consists in delicacy of proportion, a harmony of parts conveying to the mind sweet associations of thought. Holiness is the subdued reflection of the bright things of heaven, the image of God traceable in His creatures, a spirit of love, and peace, and order, gathering all things gracefully into a unity of being and a singleness of purpose. Then is not holiness true beauty ? Our services on earth are done best when they copy most the worship of heaven. There the beauty of saints and angels is their awe. The nearest to God will always be the most reverential. *J. V.*—In worship we must be reverent, sincere, earnest, and pure in heart both in our prayers and praises. Purity is the white linen of the Lord's choristers, righteousness is the comely garment of His priests, holiness is the royal apparel of His servitors. *S.*

It is part of the constitution of a church, without which it cannot be "*beautiful*," that every member should be exercising in some way his own proper gift for the service of God and the extension of His kingdom. For a church is to be a centre—a centre of expansion, always extending itself, light and love always radiating from it. The acme of holiness itself is love. Let your sympathies go out and give expression to the thought you feel. Let the Church be more what it ought to be, "*one family*," and so "*grow up into Him in all*

things, which is the Head, even Christ." *J. V.*—He takes a very limited view of what constitutes the worship of God who restricts it exclusively to those exercises of prayer, praise, or thanksgiving which are specifically religious. Our whole life should be one great instance of devotion. It is the end, the intention of it which determines the character of an act ; and if in all that we do we aim at the glory of God, "*every action of nature becomes religious*," every meal an instrument of piety, every office of ordinary life a holy oblation. It is the spirit and temper of the soul which settles the question of worship. *Thornwell.*

Prayer here, such as God can accept, adoration and praise here are qualifying souls for the deeper and nobler emotions which will accompany the grander revelations of the heavenly world. Whether any of these sensibilities will be superseded there, I will not venture to inquire. But it is not probable that reverence will ever cease, since the disclosures of the glories of God there, natural and moral, will make the distance between the finite man and the infinite God greater and greater, so that there will be the more need of reverence, and the more room for its exercise. Prepare, then, by worship here for worship there. Wherever else light-minded, be devout in God's house and in worship. If you have been profane, shake off the habit ; learn to see God everywhere and to adore Him. If you have been formal and yet decent, think that God cannot accept such services. Give your mind to the grand thoughts of the Gospel, and enter on the worship of God in spirit and in truth. Then you will have joy when you unite with all the good ones of earth and heaven in the cry, "*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which is and was and is to come !*" "*Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever !*" *Woolsey.*

Excess of material circumstance in spiritual worship, whether of architectural adornment, ritual ceremony, musical elaboration, or even intellectual fastidiousness, is as injurious to it as is overcumbersome machinery in manufacture, excess of ceremonial in social life, superfluous raiment to personal activity, or gaudy ornamentation to personal grace. It is both injurious to life and offensive to taste. But, on the other hand, if we may not overlay spiritual life, neither may we denude it. The true law of life is that its energies be developed in all the

force and with all the beauty of which they are capable, and that it worship with such cultured adornment as in the highest degree may appeal to and express its own spiritual emotions. This is the simple law and the sufficient test of all artistic appliances. Is any particular cultus conducive to the worshipping heart of the congregation? If not, and still more if it be injurious to it, then no matter how beautiful in itself it may be—how conducive to the profit and joy of other congregations—however sanctioned by history and contemporary use, let it be rejected. *Allon.*

10. The glad tidings which the world is to hear. The world's largest hopes are to be fulfilled. A new era is to begin, a reign of righteousness and peace, a time so blessed that even the inanimate creation must be partakers of the joy. Compare Isa. 35: 1; 42: 10; 44: 23; 45: 8; 49: 13; 55: 12. With the coming of Jehovah and the setting up of His kingdom all the broken harmonies of creation shall be restored. *P.*—That which is to be uttered among the peoples is the joyous Gospel of the kingdom of heaven as now come and realized. The world below, hitherto convulsed by war and anarchy, now stands upon foundations that are henceforth unshakeable under Jehovah's righteous and gentle rule. This is the glad tidings of the new era, which the poet predicts from the standpoint of his own present, depicting as he does the joy that will then pervade the whole creation. *D.*—It is when the hour of conflict is over that history comes to a right understanding of the strife, and is ready to exclaim, "Lo! God is here, and we knew it not." At the foot of every page in the annals of nations may be written "God reigns." Events as they pass away "proclaim their original;" and if you will but listen reverently, you may hear the receding centuries, as they roll into the dim distance of departed time, perpetually chanting "Te Deum Laudamus" with all the choral voices of the countless congregation of the age. *Bancroft.*

Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth must be the Christian's as it was the Israelite's motto. The earliest preaching of our Saviour and His disciples was the preaching of the Gospel of the *kingdom*. It was because *all power was given unto Him in heaven and in earth*, that, after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus sent forth His apostles to go and teach all nations. The substance of the apostles' subsequent preaching was, confessedly, the *kingdom* of God. *Thrupp.*

11-13. Nothing can excel this noble exulta-

tion of universal nature, where the whole animate and inanimate creation unite in the praises of their Maker. Poetry here seems to assume the highest tone of triumph and exultation, and to revel, if I may so express myself, in all the extravagance of joy. *Louth.*—These verses are full of comprehensive beauty and power. They present the gathering together of everything under the confessed dominion of the reigning Christ. Things in heaven as well as things on earth rejoice together in the acknowledged blessing of the Lord of peace. The Psalm is throughout a very sweet strain of millennial prophecy. *A. Pridham.*

13. *Before Jehovah, for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world in righteousness, and nations in His truth (or faithfulness).* The rejoicing described in the preceding verse is to take place in the presence (literally, to the face) of God when He assumes His universal sovereignty, the judicial function of which is here made prominent, in order to suggest the moral perfection of His reign. *In righteousness*, not merely in a righteous manner, but in the exercise of His inherent and essential justice. The use of the word *people* in the common version of the last clause obscures the sense by seeming to apply the verse to Israel, whereas it is expressly applied in the original to the nations generally. Even the *truth* or *faithfulness* of God, which commonly denotes His veracity in fulfilling His promises to the chosen people, has here a wider sense, as opposed to the dishonesty or partiality of human judges. *A.*—**He cometh.** The repetition is full of force and animation, as if the coming of Jehovah is actually taking place before the eyes of the Psalmist. It is a coming to judgment, but a judgment which is to issue in salvation. This judgment in righteousness and faithfulness, and the peace which follows thereon, are beautifully portrayed in Isa. 11: 1-9. *P.*

In the mind of the Psalmists there was nothing contradictory between faith in God as a righteous Judge and faith in God as being long-suffering and of great kindness. They did not think of God as divided between His sense of justice and His love of mercy, because they understood that mercy was never forgotten in His judgments. They felt that His judgments were the truest mercies both for themselves and for the world at large. So deep was their conviction of the blessedness of God's judgments that some of their most joyous strains are those in which they proclaim God as coming to judge the world in righteousness. *G. Forbes.*

Let all above and all below rejoice with gladness in the near development of God's reign on earth ; and no less in the more remote development of His final judgment and eternal reign of righteousness. But first is that which is nearest and of time. As God proceeds to make His name and Gospel more fully known on earth, with this advance of knowledge goes also a more full development of Himself as Supreme Ruler and Judge. Making Himself more known in these relations, He should be more heartily and reverently adored. Let the uni-

verse of intelligent beings, and indeed, through sympathy, the sea and all that fills it ; the fields and all they contain, and the trees of the wood as well, unite in exulting praise and gladness before the mighty Lord, because He ruleth in righteousness, and will bring down and bring under the cruel wrongs of sin and the very spirit of sinning—all that makes earth groan and heaven weep ; all the mass of earthly woe begotten of sin and running riot over the world's peace till God comes forth to rule and judge the world in righteousness. C.

PSALM XCVII.

- 1 THE LORD reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ;
Let the multitude of isles be glad.
- 2 Clouds and darkness are round about him :
Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne.
- 3 A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his adversaries round about.
- 4 His lightnings lightened the world :
The earth saw, and trembled.
- 5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of
the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole
earth.
- 6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen his glory.
- 7 Ashamed be all they that serve graven im-
ages,

- That boast themselves of idols :
Worship him, all ye gods.
- 8 Zion heard and was glad,
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced ;
Because of thy judgments, O LORD.
- 9 For thou, LORD, art most high above all the
earth :
Thou art exalted far above all gods.
- 10 O ye that love the LORD, hate evil :
He preserveth the souls of his saints ;
He delivereth them out of the hand of the
wicked.
- 11 Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.
- 12 Be glad in the LORD, ye righteous ;
And give thanks to his holy [*memorial*]
name.

THE keynote of this series of Psalms, "Jehovah is King," is again sounded in the first verse. The subject is the same as in the preceding Psalm—viz., the personal Advent of Jehovah, which is represented in terms borrowed from the Pentateuch, and from those earlier Psalms which describe the Theophany on occasion of the giving of the law. All nature is moved at the Divine presence. The flames which once lighted up Mount Sinai, at the appearance of the great King enlighten the whole world ; and by them His enemies, "who would not that He should reign over them," are consumed. The heavens, which now proclaim the

glory of God, shall then attest His righteousness. His glory is displayed throughout the whole earth ; and, while the worshippers of false gods are confounded, Zion rejoices and is glad ; and all nations come and worship before their King ; for His judgments are made manifest (Rev. 15: 4). C. J. E.

"Jehovah is King." Such is the glad assurance with which the Psalm opens. He has come to take possession of His throne with all the awful majesty with which He appeared on Sinai. All nature is moved at His presence. The heavens have uttered their message, telling of His righteousness, and all the nations of the

world have seen His glory. His empire must be universal. Already the idols and the worshippers of idols are ashamed ; and Zion rejoices in the coming of her King. He is near, very near. The first flush of the morning is already brightening the sky. They who love His appearing may look for Him, in holy abhorrence of evil and in faithfulness of heart, waiting till they enter into the joy of their Lord. Such is briefly the purport of the Psalm. "If the bringing in of an everlasting worship gives its distinctive coloring to the foregoing Psalm, the final casting out of evil is the keynote of this ; if the thought of the Great King bringing salvation to His people is foremost in that, in this it is the trampling down of His enemies ; there He comes 'to diadem the right ;' here, 'to terminate the evil'" (*Housman*).

The structure of the Psalm consists of strophes of three verses. In the first, the coming of Jehovah is portrayed as if actually present (vs. 1-3). In the second its effects are described on nature, and its purposes with reference to the world at large (vs. 4-6). The third speaks of the different impression produced on the heathen and on Israel, and the exaltation of God above all earthly power as the final result (vs. 7-9). The fourth is an exhortation to the righteous, and also a promise full of consolation (vs. 10-12). P.

1. "The Lord reigneth" by His providence over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to His sovereign and wise pleasure ; and He doth the same for His church. "The Lord reigneth" upon a throne of grace ! It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants. And the Lord will reign erelong upon a throne of universal judgment, conspicuous to the assembled universe—"Let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad." *Samuel Davies*.

Here's good news, glad tidings : "The Lord reigneth." It cannot be published without praise, without rejoicing, without singing, without blessing. We should dishonor this truth if we did not publish it ; if we should with silence suppress it ; if we should not speak well of it. It is so sweet and comfortable, that it fills the whole world with joy, and calls on every ear and every tongue and every heart to be glad, to rejoice and to praise God. *W. Sedgwick*.

As light irradiates all nature, so the thought of God diffuses gladness over all the moral world. The proposition which, above all others, should fill all intelligent creation with

transport, is this, There is a God. Conceive of a world where this prime revelation has never shone, having the light of common day but no knowledge of God ; conceive of the poor, blank, cheerless dwellers on this atheistic orb, and then figure to yourself some beautiful and mighty angel, who has been thousands of years filling his lamp at the central founts of light, dispatched by infinite love, and speeding to carry these tidings to the ignorant planet ; who can measure the glory of the advent ? It is a change like that when God said to chaos, Let there be light ! If in all human knowledge there is a truth which should transport us beyond ourselves, it is, that there is a God. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice ! Without it, we are a fatherless brood, and our world an orphan universe. The names of God are names of relation ; and among the relations we have found something more great, more tender, and more lovely than parent, brother, or husband, when we have found a God. J. W. A.

Faith is always assured that *God reigns* ; that He is ever pledged to order all events so as to promote the highest good of all true believers. Faith obeys ; faith is wise and cautious in the use of the appointed means ; faith compares Scripture with Scripture to ascertain the whole truth ; faith is subject to law, and impels us to use the best means to gain good ends. And then it calmly commits the future to God. If trials come, if sorrow, bereavement, loss of property, loss of health, death come in the path of duty, it trusts with absolute assurance the Divine promise ; and rising above these external trials, it triumphs even before it enters the pearly gates. *S. W. Fisher*.

2. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, but the Old Testament writers never falter in the conviction, which was the soul of all their heroism and the life blood of their religion, that in the heart of the clouds and darkness "justice and judgment are the foundations of His throne." A. M.

If in revealing Himself to mortals the invisible God should deem it wise to make some visible manifestations of His presence, it is quite obvious that they must be made *under limitations*. It should not surprise us that at Sinai, in the solemn announcement of His law, God should speak forth from the thick darkness ; that cloud and tempest, thunder and lightning, and the quaking of that grand and awful mount, should impress the assembled people with fear and even awe and dread. So when the Lord prepared for Himself a permanent dwelling-place in the tabernacle and temple, He invested

Himself in "thick darkness." Yet let it not be overlooked that a deeper meaning is here suggested by these historic facts and beautifully illustrated thereby—viz., that the reasons of God's ways are often, perhaps usually, too deep for our human line to fathom. Our short vision cannot penetrate their mystery. Clouds and darkness gather round about Him; and yet He takes cares to give us abundant reasons for believing that righteousness and judgment are the basis of His throne—the principles that forever control His decisions. C.

Righteousness is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. If there had been no creatures for Him to govern, He would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude. Judgment is the application of the principle of righteousness in His government of His creatures and their actions; it is a development of His rectitude in the management of the affairs of His great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed to some vast and important end. Judgment implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the Divine conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and everything is directed by a judgment that cannot err. Thus "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." The throne of God is built, and stands firm upon these principles; they are the place, the basis, and the foundation of His throne. Though the clouds cannot be dispelled, though there is thick darkness round about, through which our eyes cannot penetrate; yet there are principles discernible through the light of revelation, and by the eye of faith, which may serve to subdue despondency, and lead us to acquiesce in all the measures of the righteous Sovereign. Notwithstanding the appearances which obscure the providence of God, it often makes itself conspicuous in the midst of them all. When we have allowed to human agency, to human wisdom and human power a large circle of events imputed to nothing else, we see the Divine wisdom frequently disencumber itself from all second causes, and stretch itself out in the face of all men. Many remarkable deliverances God works out for his servants, in order to make bare the interposition of Providence, and to show to His enemies that there is a "God that judgeth in the earth." He writes deep moral lessons from the events of history, so that the history of the Church and the world is the history of Providence. R. Hall.

God Himself can be seen in the darkness, as He cannot be in the light. His loved ones can

commune with Him in the shadow, as they cannot in the glare. "Clouds and darkness are round about him;" and the child of God who is most favored of God "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Not in the blaze of prosperity's sunlight, but in the gloaming of the dusk of sorrow and of trial, can the child of God see the face of God, and have those disclosures of God's love which only the darkness brings. S. S. T.

The persecutions of the good, the afflictions of the righteous, the desolations of conquest, the fall of nations and their liberties, the extinction of churches, the sufferings of innocence, the pains of animals, the removal by death of genius and character just ripened to bless the world—there is no end to our dark questions. There are times, too, when our own personal experience becomes enveloped in darkness. Practically, much is known about God and His ways, all that we need to know; but, speculatively, or by the mere understanding, almost nothing, save that we cannot know. The believing mind dwells in continual light; for when God is revealed within curious and perplexing questions are silent. If we but love the right, God will be revealed in us internally, as the object of our love and trust. He will not appear to be distant or difficult. We shall know Him as a friendly presence in our heart's love, and we shall have such a blessed confidence in Him that if, in the outer world of fact and event, clouds and darkness appear to be round about Him, we shall have the certainty within that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. Meanwhile, He will be teaching us graciously and drawing us insensibly through our holy sympathies into the sense of His ways, and widening, as fast as possible, the circle of our human limitation, that we may expatiate in discoveries more free. Bushnell.

3. A fire goeth before Him. So was it at Sinai, so must it be; the very Being of God is power consuming all opposition; omnipotence is a devouring flame which "*burneth up His enemies round about.*" God is long-suffering, but when He comes forth to judgment the unrighteous will be as chaff before the flame. S.

7. Shamed shall be all serving a graven image and boasting themselves of idols. Bow down to Him, all ye gods! The first word means not merely ashamed, but disappointed, defeated, and confounded. *All serving or all servers (i.e., worshippers) of a graven image. Boasting themselves, exulting in the knowledge and possession and imagined favor of material images. Idols,*

nothings or nonentities. The use of this word shows that in the following clause the false gods are invested with existence only to be treated with the more contempt. A.

This and the next verse describe the twofold result of the Divine judgment, the impression produced on the heathen and on Israel, the confusion of all worshippers of idols, and the joy and exultation of the people of God. P.—When the glory of Jehovah is revealed, everything that is opposed to it will be reproved and consumed by its light. Those that serve idols become conscious of their delusion with shame and terror. The superhuman powers deified by the heathen will then submit themselves to Him who alone is Elohim in absolute personality. D.

Worship Him, all ye gods. These words are not applied to Christ directly in Heb. 1:6. It is merely said that when God sends His Son into the world, He may be understood as saying again of Him what is here said of Himself, that even the false gods are required to worship Him, much more the angels who have real existence. A.

8. When Zion hears that Jehovah has appeared, and that all the world and all powers become submissive to Him, she rejoices; for it is her God, whose kingship is acknowledged. And all the daughter churches of the land of Judah exult along with the mother Church over the salvation, which dawns through judgments. D.—Although the coming of Jehovah has been portrayed in images full of awe and terror, yet here, as in the two preceding Psalms, it is described as a coming to be welcomed with jubilant gladness by His Church. In the same spirit our Lord, when speaking of the signs of fear which shall be the precursors of His second coming, says, "When ye shall see these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." P.

9. That such a God, the Great Jehovah, is high above all the earth and all the wicked thereof is here assigned as properly *the* ground and reason of this joy. How infinitely above the empty and powerless gods of the heathen! C.

10. The Psalm closes with a practical application, because the King and Judge is drawing near, a warning against the evil which is in the world, and an assurance of Divine protection and blessing to those who "hate evil." P.—The one great moral lesson from these views of God and His throne is briefly put here: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." As God hates all sin and wrong, so should ye. He who preserves your souls and redeems you from the

power of the wicked does all in the love of righteousness and the hatred of sin; therefore let this benevolence of your God prompt and inspire you to like love of others' well-being and abhorrence of all evil. C.

He preserveth, He delivereth.

There are two parts of Divine protection—preservation and deliverance. Preservation is safe keeping, guarding against peril; deliverance, saving those already involved in peril. The shepherd keeps his sheep lest they should fall among wolves; but if perchance they should fall into the clutches of the wolf, he pursues and delivers. So the Lord keeps the souls of His saints lest they fall into the hands of the wicked; and if they should fall, He will deliver them. *Musculus*.—He loves His saints on account of the image of Himself which they bear; He loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the Spirit; He loves them on account of the relation they stand in to Him as His people, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon His care, that delight in His person, that enjoyment in His service which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children. He loves them because they imitate His perfections in some humble measure; because they receive the word of His mouth; because they are ready to obey every call of His providence, setting themselves in the paths of His testimony wherever He may direct. R. Hall.

11. *Light (is) sown for the just (man), and for right-hearted (men) joy.* The figurative term *light* is explained by the literal one *joy* or *gladness*. Its being *sown* suggests the two ideas of diffusion and productiveness. Compare the similar and parallel expression, Psalm 112:4. The alteration of the singular and plural number shows that the just man of the first clause is an ideal person, representing a whole class. A.—Light and gladness are *sown*. A startling figure that, and a grand one, too. God as a sower, scattering seeds of light. The statement is: God gives light to His children as seed. The figure simply recognizes the great law of growth which everything in the universe, from a grass-blade to the spiritual kingdom of God on earth, obeys. Nothing comes into life full-grown. The tree and the grain grow up from seed. So of the fruits of the spirit in men. Knowledge, faith, love, joy, grow through successive stages, like the blade, the ear, and the full corn. If then light and gladness are to be looked for in Christian life, it is important to remember that they are growths, and that as

such they carry with them a certain amount of concealment and delay. God hides away light and gladness in certain things which, for the time, give no hint of what is within ; and when God gives us these seeds, He expects us to look for our light in them. One of the hardest lessons we ever learn is to undertake that search cheerfully and believingly. V.

"Light sown," to produce a harvest of blessings, the best of "gladness." The figure is exquisitely beautiful. Light is one of the finest possible emblems of happiness. That it should be planted as a seed is of course a poetic conception, yet at once clear in sense and beautiful in figure, surely foretoking a future product of good for the truly righteous. C.—*Light is sown for the righteous*—that is, *gladness for the upright in heart*. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are bid to expect tribulation in the world ; yet let them know, to their comfort, that *light is sown* for them, it is designed and prepared for them ; what is sown will come up again in due time ; though, like winter seed, it may lie long under the clods and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a harvest in the appointed weeks. They that *sow in tears* shall without fail *reap in joy*. Christ told His disciples at parting, *You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*. Gladness is sure to the *upright in heart*, to those only that are sincere in religion. *The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment*. There is no serenity without a lasting sincerity. H.

Light is sown in God's discipline with us, God's providences upon, over, and around us ; in all things the germs of light are hidden, for discovery, for cherishing, for growth, for a future and glorious harvest. God's word itself is hidden in the heart, to break forth into glory, to constitute now, while beneath the furrow, as it were, the life of God in the soul of man, the life hidden with Christ in God, and to constitute, when all these preparatory and growing processes are finished, the suddenly revealed harvest of eternal light and blessedness in Christ, according to the rule that *when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory*. Cheever.—Light is sown for the righteous ; and the harvest from God's sowing never fails. First conceptions and lower knowledge is the seed of the higher ; and that again of higher still. Mistakes and misconceptions fall off and die if only there be the fruitful ground of "an honest and good heart." It is of far more importance to have right dispositions than right notions. A clear heart is better than

a sound creed. Depend upon it, the sound creed is *in* the clear heart, or will come by its means. But the clear heart is not, of necessity, in the sound creed. *Raleigh*.

Most thoughtful men increase in faith and spiritual discernment by having their doubts cleared up. Religious thought in this way grows into a personal feeling ; and the solid rock of truer conviction and deeper trust as a firm foundation for the soul to build upon for eternity remains behind after all the abrasion of loose and more perishable materials through speculation. A different if not a truer revelation of heavenly realities is given to us through the dark, distressing process of doubting, than through the bright, joyful exercise of unhesitating faith ; just as our knowledge of the chemistry of the sun and stars, of the physical constitution of distant worlds is derived not from the bright bands of their spectrum, which reveal only their size and shape, but from Fraunhofer's wonderful lines—those black blank spaces breaking up the spectrum bands—which tell us of rays arrested in their path and prevented from bearing their message to us by particular metallic vapors. Unto the upright, just because of the purity and singleness of their motives and the earnestness of their quest after truth, there ariseth light in the darkness. We must remember that "light is *sown* for the righteous ;" that its more or less rapid germination and development depend upon the nature of the soil on which it falls and the circumstances that influence it ; that, like seed, it at first lies concealed in the dark furrow, under the cheerless clod, in the cold, ungenial winter ; but that even then, while shining in the darkness, while struggling with doubts and difficulties of the mind and heart, it is nevertheless the source of much comfort, and in its slow, quickening, and hidden growth the cause of lively hope, and of bright anticipation of that time when it shall blossom and ripen in the summer time of heaven, shine more and more unto the perfect day. *Hugh Macmillan*.

Righteous souls pass through many dark hours ; sometimes they are put to a stand, ready to question if they have any interest in Christ ; for they have a nature in which dwells every evil which wars against God, and the peace, holiness, and comfort of their souls ; hence they are sometimes in seasons of darkness ; they see not things in the light of truth ; they enjoy not the comfort of the truth that they are righteous in the righteousness of Christ, and made upright by His grace. Upright souls mourn in darkness, and desire ever to walk in the light ;

yes, says Peter, ye "greatly rejoice" in the salvation of Jesus, "though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." If need be! What need can there be? He tells us "that the trial of your faith might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Tried faith is true faith. True faith stands the fire of temptation; trusts Christ in heaviness; stays upon Him in darkness; for at all times, in all seasons, under all circumstances, light and gladness are sown for you and in due season shall spring up in you. They are sown where every covenant blessing is reaped: in Jesus, the surety of the covenant. All natural light flows from the sun; all spiritual light flows from Christ, the Sun of righteousness, who saith, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Is light sown in Christ for us? Let us with David claim in faith, "The Lord is *my* light, and my salvation." Does gladness of heart spring from Christ? Then say, "My meditations of Him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord." *W. Mason.*

12. Rejoice in the Lord. Our rejoicing in the Lord relates to the existence, the perfections and providence of the ever-blessed God; the discoveries of His will to us, especially in His word; the interest we have in Him, and the relations wherein we stand to Him; His continual protection, guidance, and influence; His gracious intercourse with us in the duties of religious worship, and, finally, the hope He has given us of fulness of joy in His beatific and glorious presence above. *H. Grove.*

Rejoice and give thanks. He unites joy in the Lord and praise of God, for it is not possible for a man to praise the Lord unless he rejoices in Him. Again, he connects the praise of God with the remembrance of His holiness. And with good reason; for it is the chief use of Divine praise that we should keep fresh in our souls the remembrance of God and of all the blessings received from Him. Thus this verse contains the root and fruit of Divine praise. The root is joy in God; the fruit is the remembrance of God and His goodness. *Musculus.*

Well, indeed, may all the righteous rejoice in the Lord, who makes sure to them such a wealth of blessing. Let them especially rejoice as they think of His *holiness*, His abhorrence of sin; His glorious purity; His supreme devotion to the highest interests of His moral universe. *C.*

The uniform calm and cheerfulness which lights up the face of a true Christian, the happy expression of countenance, the sunshine on the brow—these are never to be found where the life is not careful. Not that strictness will always make a man cheerful. God sometimes permits His truest servants to be afflicted with depression of spirits for many reasons. But, assuredly, though you may sometime see strictness of life without cheerfulness of spirits, you never see cheerfulness of spirits without strictness of life. The careless Christian is sure to be discontented with himself, and so robs himself of the very thing which would make service happy. Try to make your service strict and careful. No doubt the bent of your will is chiefly shown in the great duties, but the sense of love and of wishing to be loved is chiefly shown in the small duties. Let each have its place. The great sterling duties, the exact truth of word, the resolute refusal to countenance wrong, the command of temper, the mastery of indolence, the unstained purity—these, and such as these, form the character, and fashion our souls into instruments in God's hands for high and heavenly purposes in His providence. But the carelessness over details, the watchfulness against faults which we know to be faults, but which, notwithstanding, seem venial, the devout regularity and attention in our private prayers, the invariable good humor of our manners, the seeking for occasions of kindness and unselfishness, the avoidance of little temptations, the care not to cause little annoyances and little troubles—to attend to all this for the sake of Christ our Master is the natural and fitting expression of a loving heart. And such love is always repaid ten thousandfold. *Bishop Temple.*

PSALM XCVIII.

A PSALM.

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| <p>1 O sing unto the LORD a new song ;
For he hath done marvellous things :
His right hand, and his holy arm, hath
wrought salvation for him.</p> <p>2 The LORD hath made known his salvation :
His righteousness hath he openly shewed in
the sight of the nations.</p> <p>3 He hath remembered his mercy and his faith-
fulness toward the house of Israel :
All the ends of the earth have seen the sal-
vation of our God.</p> <p>4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the
earth :
Break forth and sing for joy, yea, sing
praises.</p> | <p>5 Sing praises unto the LORD with the harp ;
With the harp and the voice of melody.</p> <p>6 With trumpets and sound of cornet
Make a joyful noise before the King, the
LORD.</p> <p>7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ;
The world, and they that dwell therein ;</p> <p>8 Let the floods clap their hands ;
Let the hills sing for joy together ;</p> <p>9 Before the LORD, for he cometh to judge the
earth :
He shall judge the world with righteous-
ness,
And the peoples with equity.</p> |
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THIS Psalm is little more than an echo of Psalm 96. Its subject is "the last great revelation, the final victory of God, when His salvation and His righteousness, the revelation of which He has promised to the house of Israel, shall be manifested both to His own people and to all the nations of the earth." P.—It consists of three triplets: the first celebrating the salvation of God, the second calling upon men to praise Him with all the auxiliaries of song, and the third summoning inanimate nature to join the chorus that hopes with joy for the judgment to come. M.

The parallels of this Psalm with the Virgin's Song are very striking, and it seems as if Mary had this Psalm in her eye when she composed her song of triumph. And this is a further argument that the whole Psalm is yet to be ultimately understood of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of His Gospel through all the nations of the earth; and taken in this view, no language can be too strong, nor poetic imagery too high to point out the unsearchable riches of Christ. *A. Clarke.*

This is the only Psalm which is entitled simply "a Psalm." It is at least interesting to notice that a song of Zion which so exults in the King's arrival should be called pre-eminently Mizmor; as if the Psalm of Psalms were that which celebrates *Israel, and the earth at large, blessed in Messiah's Advent.* *A. A. Bonar.*

1. *Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song; for He*

hath done marvellous things. We had a new song before (Psalm 96), because the Lord was coming; but now we have another because He has come, and seen, and conquered. Jesus, our King, has lived a marvellous life, died a marvellous death, risen by a marvellous resurrection, and ascended marvellously into heaven. By His Divine power He has sent forth the Holy Spirit doing marvels, and by that sacred energy His disciples have also wrought marvellous things and astonished all the earth. Idols have fallen, superstitions have withered, systems of error have fled, and empires of cruelty have perished. His acts have proved His Deity, Jesus is Jehovah, and therefore we sing unto Him as the Lord. The salvation which Jesus has accomplished is wrought out with wonderful wisdom, hence it is ascribed to His right hand; it meets the requirements of justice, hence we read of His holy arm; it is His own unaided work, hence all the glory is ascribed to Him; and it is marvellous beyond degree, hence it deserves a new song. S.

3. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth. His *mercy* moved Him to make His promise, and His *truth* hath engaged Him to perform it; and He hath been mindful of both, by scattering the blessed influences of His light and bounty over the face of the whole earth, and causing all nations to see and partake of the salvation of God. *Matthew Hole.*

5. The voice of a Psalm. With

Psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned from Babylon. Psalms gave courage and strength to the Maccabees in their brave struggles to achieve their country's independence, and were the repeated expression of their thanksgivings. The Lord of Psalmists and the Son of David, by the words of a Psalm proved Himself to be higher than David, and sang Psalms with His apostles on the night before he suffered, when He instituted the holy supper of His love. With Psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And after his own example the apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colossæ to teach and admonish one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Jerome tells us that in his day the Psalms were to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine, and that they fell sweetly on the ear, mingling with the songs of birds, and the scent of flowers in spring. The ploughman; as he guided his plough, chanted the hal-lélujah, and the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. P.

7, 8. These appeals to nature in her great departments—of the sea in its mighty amplitude, and the earth with its floods and hills—form, not a warrant, but a call on Christian ministers to recognize God more in their prayers and sermons as the God of creation, instead of restricting themselves so exclusively to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Do the one, and not leave the other undone. *Thomas Chalmers.*

The Psalm is much occupied in celebrating the benign fruits *which Christ's reign is to yield* in all the earth. It will be a reign of holiness. This is its proper and distinctive nature. Under it, the ends of the earth will fear God, and rejoice in His salvation. It will be a reign of justice. Under it the wars and oppressions and cruelties, the unequal laws and iniquitous insti-

tutions that have so long vexed and cursed the world, shall find a place no more. This happy reformation is usually foretold in the form of a proclamation that the Lord is coming "*to judge the earth.*" It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the true sense and intention of that oft-repeated proclamation. It does not refer, as an unwary reader might suppose, to the Judgment of the Great Day. There is no terror in it. The Psalms that have it for their principal burden are jubilant in the highest degree. The design of the proclamation is to announce Christ in the character of a peaceful prince coming to administer equal laws with an impartial hand, and so to cause wrong and contention to cease in the earth. This is Christ's manner of judging the earth. What He has already done in this direction enables us to form a clear conception of what He will yet set Himself to do. When He designs to accomplish great and salutary reforms in the political and social institutions of a people, He begins by dislodging bad principles from men's minds and planting scriptural principles in their stead; by purging evil passions from men's hearts, and baptizing them with the Spirit of truth and justice, godliness and lovingkindness. A sure foundation having been thus laid for a better order of things, He will by some storm of controversy or of revolution sweep away the institutions in which injustice has entrenched itself, and will thus make it possible for righteousness to have free course. Oh, what a store of comfort for the down-trodden, the enslaved, the needy, is laid up in the announcement that the Lord is coming to be the avenger of all such! Well may all the creatures be invited to clap their hands for joy at the thought that He has taken this work in hand; that He sitteth upon the floods, and that the storms that agitate the nations are the chariot in which He rides to take possession of the earth, and make it an abode of righteousness and peace. *W. Binnie.*

PSALM XCIX.

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| <p>1 THE LORD reigneth ; let the peoples tremble :
He sitteth upon [<i>dwelleth between</i>] the cherubim ; let the earth be moved.</p> <p>2 The LORD is great in Zion ;
And he is high above all the peoples.</p> <p>3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name :
Holy is he.</p> <p>4 The king's strength also loveth judgment ;
Thou dost establish equity,
Thou executest judgment and righteousness
in Jacob.</p> <p>5 Exalt ye the LORD our God,
And worship at his footstool
Holy is he.</p> | <p>6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,
And Samuel among them that call upon his
name ;
They called upon the LORD, and he answered
them.</p> <p>7 He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud :
They kept his testimonies, and the statute
that he gave them.</p> <p>8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God :
Thou wast a God that forgavest them,
Though thou tookest vengeance of their
doings.</p> <p>9 Exalt ye the LORD our God,
And worship at his holy hill ;
For the LORD our God is holy.</p> |
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THIS is the last of the series of Royal Psalms, of Psalms which celebrate the coming of Jehovah as King. The first of the series, the ninety-third, opens with the announcement that "Jehovah is King," passes on to tell that His throne has been from everlasting, that He made the world and that He rules it—rules the rage of the elements and the convulsions of political strife, of which that is the figure—and then concludes with one brief glance at His revelation of Himself to His people, and the distinguishing glory of the house in which He deigns to dwell, "*Holiness* becometh Thine house forever." The ninety-fifth Psalm ascribes glory to Him as "a great King above all gods" (v. 3). The ninety-sixth would have the glad tidings run far and wide that "Jehovah is King," that "He shall judge the people righteously" (v. 13). The ninety-seventh opens, "Jehovah is King," speaks of the glory of His advent, and of the joy with which it is welcomed by His people. The ninety-eighth calls upon all lands to break forth into loud shouts "before the King Jehovah," to go forth to meet Him with glad acclaim, with the voice of harp and cornet and trumpet, as men go forth to meet a monarch who comes in state to take possession of the throne of his fathers. The ninety-ninth, like the ninety-third and the ninety-seventh, opens with the joyful announcement that "Jehovah is King," and then bids all men fall down and confess His greatness, and worship Him who alone is *holy*. Both the first and the last of the series, the ninety-third and the ninety-ninth,

celebrate the kingly majesty and holiness of Jehovah, and also the holiness of His worship.

All these Psalms alike tell of the setting up of a Divine kingdom upon earth. All alike anticipate the event with joy. One universal anthem bursts from the whole wide world to greet the advent of the righteous King. Not Zion only and the daughters of Judah are glad, but the dwellers in far-off islands and the ends of the earth. Even inanimate nature sympathizes with the joy ; the sea thunders her welcome, the rivers clap their hands, the trees of the wood break forth into singing before the Lord. In all these Psalms alike the joy springs from the same source, from the thought that on this earth, where might has so long triumphed over right, a *righteous* King shall reign, a kingdom shall be set up which shall be a kingdom of *righteousness* and judgment and truth. In this Psalm, not only the righteous sway of the King, but His awful holiness, forms the subject of praise, and the true character of His worshippers as consecrated priests, holy, set apart for His service, is illustrated by the example of holy men of old, like Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

The two principal divisions of the Psalm are marked by the greater refrain with which each closes, "Exalt ye Jehovah our God," etc. (vs. 5, 9). But the thrice-repeated lesser refrain, "He is holy," more full, as at the close (in v. 9), "Jehovah our God is holy," marks also a strophical division, and is, in the words of Delitzsch, "an earthly echo of the seraphic *Trisagion*" (compare Isa. 6 : 3). We have thus

three strophes or Sanctuses (vs. 1-3; 4, 5, and 6-9), the first and second consisting each of six lines. In each of these Jehovah is acknowledged in His peculiar covenant relation to His people. In the first, He is "great in Zion" (v. 2); in the second, He has "executed righteousness in Jacob" (v. 4), and He is "Jehovah our God" (v. 5); in the third, the great examples of this covenant relationship are cited from Israel's ancient history; and again God is twice claimed as "Jehovah our God" (vs. 8, 9). In each there is the same exhortation to worship (vs. 3, 5, 9), and in each the nature of the worship and the character of the worshippers is implied, because the character of God is in each exhibited, "He is holy." But in the third Sanctus this is brought out most fully. The priestly character of all true worship is declared. All who call upon Jehovah call Him as His priests, all anointed with the same holy oil, all clothed in the same garments of holiness, "for Jehovah our God is holy." Bengel, recognizing this threefold partition of the Psalm, explains the structure somewhat differently. "The ninety-ninth Psalm," he says, "has three parts, in which the Lord is celebrated as He who is to come, as He who is, and as He who was, and each part is closed with the ascription of praise, He is holy." P.

When the Prophet Isaiah saw his great vision of the King in His beauty, "sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up," and His train filling the temple, he heard from the voices of the encompassing seraphim the triple ascription of praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." This Psalm may be called the earthly echo of that celestial doxology; for it is divided into three great sections, at the close of each of which it comes like a recurring thunder peal—"for it is holy;" "for He is holy;" "for the Lord our God is holy." And these three sections, which thus celebrate the different sides of the Divine nature, and climb up to the one climactic thought—the holiness of God—stand related to each other in a regular progress and sequence. The first of them magnifies His universal dominion, as sitting between the cherubim, and being high above all people, and calls for praise to the name which is great and terrible. The second of them hymns the praises of that dominion which is as just as it is strong, which establishes equity and gives ordinances and statutes to Jacob. And the third of them sets forth the close relation of love and fellowship and mutual converse which is possible between sinful men and this mighty God. "They call upon the Lord, and He answers them; He

speaks to them in the cloudy pillar; they keep His testimonies." "Thou was a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." And on this loftiest of all the thoughts, that God talks with men and listens to them; that He gives them His mind and will, and strengthens them to keep it; that He smites them in order that they may be good, and pardons them even while He smites, there is piled a third call for praise: "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy." A. M.

1. The Lord reigns. God governs the world by His providence, governs the Church by His grace, and both by His Son. We are to believe not only that *the Lord lives*, but that *the Lord reigns*. H.

3. It is holy. No attribute is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity and so frequently by angels that stand before His throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it as this? Isa. 6:3: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory;" and Rev. 4:8: "The four living creatures rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." His power of sovereignty as Lord of hosts is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of His holiness. Where do we read of the crying out, Eternal, eternal, eternal; or Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts! Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits forever in heaven. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendor of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, His wisdom a holy wisdom, His arm of power a "holy arm;" His truth or promise a "holy promise." *Holy* and *true* go hand and hand (Rev. 6:10). "His name," which signifies all His attributes in conjunction, "*is holy*." Charnock.

4. The King's strength. The same King who is mentioned v. 1, Jehovah. His might is no arbitrary power, like that of earthly tyrants, but a judgment-loving might. His power only expresses itself in righteousness. He has "established uprightness" as the great eternal law of His government, the inner principle of His sway, and He has manifested it in all His acts: "He has executed judgment and righteousness in Jacob." P.

6, 7. The third *Sanctus* looks back into the history of the days of old prior to the kings. In support of the statement that Jehovah is a living God and a God that proves Himself in grace and judgment, the Psalmist appeals to

three heroes of the days of old and to their recorded experiences. D.—The happiness of Israel in God's government is here further made out by some particular instances of His administration, especially with reference to those that were, in their day, the prime leaders and most active useful governors of that people, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy or Divine government began (for they were employed to form Israel into a people), and in the last of whom that form of government, in a great measure, ended. Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be *among his priests*, for he executed the priest's office till Aaron was settled in it, and he consecrated Aaron and his sons; therefore the Jews call him the *Priest of the priests*. H.

Moses is, so to speak, the proto-priest of Israel, he having twice performed priestly acts that laid the foundation for all ages to come—viz., the sprinkling of the blood at the ratification of the covenant under Sinai, and the whole ritual, which was to be a pattern for the consecrated priesthood, at the consecration of the priests; it was he also that, previous to the consecration of the priests, attended to the service in the sanctuary; he set the shew-bread in order, set up the candlestick, and burnt incense upon the golden altar. D.—So likewise he “called upon the Lord” as “a priest,” in intercession for his people. P.—Aaron is the first priest appointed by Moses; the father of the priesthood, the one with whom the divinely selected mediatorial priesthood began. D.

Samuel also, though not here classed with the priests, but mentioned as a great example of prayer, not only like Moses discharged priestly functions, but also like Moses interceded for the people. We find him at Ramah offering sacrifices in the high place, and his independent priestly position so recognized by the people that they would not partake of the sacrifice till he had blessed it (1 Sam. 9 : 12, 13). We find him on the occasion of a battle offering a whole burnt offering unto Jehovah (1 Sam. 7 : 9), at the same time that he sternly rebukes Saul for presuming to do the same thing (1 Sam. 13 : 11–13). For the efficacy of his prayers and intercessions—on which, and not on sacrifices, the stress is here laid—see the instances in 1 Sam. 7 : 8, 9; 12 : 16–18. P.—His character as mediator in connection with Divine service is outweighed by his character as a man mighty in prayer; by earnest entreaty he obtained for Israel the victory of Ebenezer over the Philistines, and confirmed his words of warning with the miraculous sign that at his calling upon God

it thundered and rained in the midst of a cloudless season. The poet purposely says: Moses and Aaron were among His priests, Samuel among those that called upon His name. D.

Each of these three stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because His holiness had been insulted; and acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would have executed judgment in Jacob. They made it their life's business to call upon Him in prayer. S.—*He answered them*, and granted them the things which they called upon Him for. Miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, God not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but He communed with them as one friend familiarly converses with another. *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar*. H.

S. There is here a beautiful transition from the representatives of the people to the people themselves. The pronoun in the first clause (*them*) can refer only to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; in the second, it is applicable both to them and to the people; in the third, it relates to the latter exclusively. A.

Thou forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings.

Because He loves the person and hates only the sin, therefore He preserves the one, destroys only the other. The covenant that is made with us in Christ is not a covenant made with works, but with persons; and, therefore, though the works be often hateful, yet He goes on to love the persons; and that He may continue to love them, destroys out of them what He hates, but cutteth not them off. *T. Goodwin*.—It is a blessed assurance that nothing can disturb our standing in the covenant. Answer and forgiveness are certain, though vengeance is taken of our inventions. Yet withal we are not shut out from God. We are able to speak to, and to hear Him; we receive what we need and much more; and, above all, we have the sweet, abiding sense of forgiveness. A. E.

Forgavest. Forgiveness is at bottom the undisturbed communication of the love of God to sinful men. We are too apt to think that God pardons men in the fashion in which the sovereign pardons a culprit who has been sentenced to be hanged. Such pardon implies nothing as to the feelings of either the criminal or the monarch. There need neither be pity on the one side nor penitence on the other. The true idea of forgiveness is to be found not in the region of law only, but in the region of love and fatherhood. The forgiveness of God is

over and over again set forth in Scripture as being ■ Father's forgiveness. **Vengeance.** The modern notion attached to revenge is by no means to be found in the word which is here employed. Our notion of vengeance is harm, or loss, or pain of some sort inflicted at the bidding of private and passionate resentment and hate, in opposition to the calm and unhatred course of public justice. We set up "the wild justice of revenge," as the phrase goes, against the course of sovereign and authoritative retribution and punitive action. But what the Old Testament meant by vengeance is precisely that public justice to which the modern notion of revenge is diametrically opposed. And what this verse says is, "Thou wast a God that didst forgive," and in the very act of forgiving, moved by no personal animosity, moved by no passionate resentment, but in the calm, sovereign, righteous process of that law, which is only the manifestation and the form of expression of Thine infinite love, didst at one and the same time forgive the man, and smite and punish him because of his evil. A. M.

Even Divine forgiveness is not inconsistent with the exaction of certain penal consequences of evil-doing. A wound may be healed by nature, but there remains a scar. No man can *sin with impunity*, even though he may repent and be forgiven. There are effects left on body, mind, heart, conscience, which not even Divine grace wholly removes. No repentance can restore lost opportunity, forfeited privilege, wasted time, or exhausted life. God is not vindictive, but He is vindicative; He is not a revenging, but He is an avenging God. He owes something to His own inflexible holiness, justice, truth; to the unchanging physical and moral order He has established. *Anon.*—God is too loving to shield men from the natural consequences, in the physical and social world, of their sins. The penitent drunkard's hand shakes, and his constitution is not renewed, though his spirit is. Only, punishment is changed into discipline, when the heart rests in the assurance of pardon, and is accepted as a token of ■ Father's love. David's sin relaxed the bonds of family life, and set an evil example of passion, indulged in the face of law, to his children. His eldest son copied his example, and added fresh horrors to it. That, and the miserable polygamy which David permitted himself, bore bitter fruit in Absalom's revenging his sister's disgrace by procuring Amnon's murder. David, conscious of his own sin, had weakly left Amnon unpunished: and the same consciousness, added to his foolish fondness for

his handsome, good-for-nothing son, led him to wink at his flagrant violation of law. He forgot that he was God's minister of justice, and only remembered that he was Absalom's father. His feeble compromise only irritated his son, and suggested the conspiracy to him. The success of it was facilitated by David's passiveness, which sprang from his sense of demerit, and had helped to wean his subjects' hearts from him. Thus every way God made of the vice the whip to scourge the sinner, and David, like us all, had to drink as he had brewed, though he was forgiven the sin. A. M.

Conflict between the Old and New Nature.

As there is much beast and some devil in man, so is there some angel and some God in man. The beast and the devil may be conquered, but in this life never destroyed. *Coleridge.*—There is an intestine war in man between reason and the passions. He might enjoy some repose had he reason alone without passion, or passion alone without reason. But, having both, he must needs live in a state of warfare, since he cannot maintain peace with one without being at war with the other. Hence he is always divided and always at variance with himself. *Pascal.*

No sooner is peace with God, through Christ, settled, than war is proclaimed, and the man involved in its arduous and lifelong struggles. *Conflict* begins with conversion. Besides the world and its influences, the passions that he loved in his breast and fed by long indulgence into strength, it may be said that "his enemies are the men of his own house." *Guthrie.*—So long as we are in the world and of it, we know nothing of spiritual conflict. But when we become sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, then it is that we become conscious of conflict. "Conflict with what?" Conflict with the selfishness of our own hearts. Self wishes to be lord, and forbids Christ to be Lord. We have to resist self. *Calthrop.*—That idol, *myself*, is the idol we all bow down to. What made Eve fall and hurried her headlong upon the forbidden fruit, but that wretched thing, *herself*? What drew that brother-murderer to kill Abel? What drove the old world on to corrupt their ways? Who but themselves and their own pleasures? What was the cause of Solomon's falling into idolatry, and multiplying strange wives? What but himself, whom he would rather please than God? What was the hook that took David and snared him first in adultery,

but his self-lust ; and then in murder, but his self-credit and self-honor ? What made Judas sell his Master for thirty pieces of money, but a piece of self-love, idolizing avaricious self ? What made Demas go off the way of the Gospel to embrace this present world ? Even self-love and love of gain for himself. Every man blameth the devil for his sins, but the great devil, the house devil of every man, that eateth and lieth in every man's bosom, that idol which killeth all—himself. *Rutherford.*

Day and night follow each other not more surely than punishment follows upon sin. Whether the sin be great or little, momentary or habitual, wilful or through infirmity, its own peculiar punishment seems, according to the law of nature, to follow as far as our experience of that law carries us, sooner or later, lighter or heavier, as the case may be. *Newman.*

The pardoning mercy of God leaves many penalties unremoved. Forgiveness and punishment both come from the same source, and generally go together. The old statement, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is absolutely true, universally true. The Gospel is not its abrogation. It modifies it, it gives it a new aspect ; in some respects it gives it a new incidence ; but be sure of this, that the harvest has to be gathered. For our worst sins there is plenteous redemption. My sin may become white as snow and pass away altogether, in as far as it has power to disturb or sadden my relation to God. Yet our least sins leave in our lives, in our characters, in our memories, in our consciences, sometimes in our weakness, often in our worldly position, in our reputation, in our success, in our health, in a thousand other ways—leave their traces and consequences. But pardoning love so modifies the punishment that it becomes an occasion for solemn thankfulness. Whatever painful consequences of past sin may still linger about our lives or haunt our hearts, we may be sure of two things about them all, that they come *from* forgiving mercy ; that they come *for* our profit. The truths that lie in the whole are these : pardon and retribution are ever united ; they spring from one source of holy love, and they ought to become to us the occasions of solemn and thankful praise. "Exalt the Lord our God . . . for He is holy." Thou forgavest them, and didst punish their inventions. A. M.

9. The Lord our God is holy in His power, holy in His righteousness, and holy especially

in His mercy. In the great work of salvation His power is displayed pre-eminently in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, His righteousness in the propitiating work of the Son, and His mercy in the giving and forgiving deeds of the Father. M.

The God of Revelation is a moral God. If He is power and wisdom, He is also sanctity, justice, providence, mercy, love. According to the Gospel love is His essence ; and love is interest in and self-sacrifice for that which is its object. Such a God alone can be the adequate object of religion. Traceable in every human history, especially in the history of one separated and chosen race, the interest of the Perfect Moral Being in the moral and thinking creatures of His hand culminates at Bethlehem and Calvary. The incarnation of the Eternal Son, the manifestation of the Divine life of love and justice, and compassion and purity, flashing through a veil of flesh, and leading up to a death of agony and shame, which alters the whole existing moral relation between earth and heaven ; this is the glorious creed which rivets a Christian's conviction of the moral intensity of the life of God. *Liddon.*

The holiness of God must be recognized by any one who would for a moment feel safe in the universe. If God were otherwise than holy and just, what could restrain any arbitrary exercise of His power ? How could we know that the most terrific catastrophe the human imagination ever conceived shall not at the next moment befall the creation ? His holiness, which men hate, is the safeguard of the universe in which they live. He could not properly be worshipped except He were holy. Worship mere power, and it demoralizes, it demonizes. Worship intellect, and it degrades the moral nature in us. Worship can only be offered to absolute and sovereign purity of character ; and that must be God's character, or else let every harp on high be silent and every heart on earth be dumb ; shut up the Psalms and seal them ; put an end to every service of praise in the creation. God's holiness shines upon us through His law, shines in our own reason and conscience and their intuitions, shines clear and evident in the person of Christ, and is the fundamental fact of character which we are always to affirm. But then with this holiness is united tenderness ; and it is that which it seems harder still to recognize and declare, for we associate austerity with holiness ; we associate the Divine holiness with infinite, solitary, and self-absorbed grandeur, cold and high and far away. We associate with absolute justice absolute sov-

ereignty, rather than absolute tenderness ; and yet there is in His Word, even in the ancient Scripture, the declaration of His tenderness. We see this illustrated most beautifully and perfectly, of course, in the life of the Son of God, whose mission it was to reveal the infinite Father to us, that we might not be afraid of

His holiness, but might see the very splendor of that holiness surrounded and crowned with the sunny radiance of this tenderness. And we must affirm that tenderness combined with that perfect holiness in God, in order to fulfil the precept of the Master, and thoroughly, with heart and soul, believe in Him. R. S. S.

PSALM C.

A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING.

- 1 MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
- 2 Serve the LORD with gladness :
Come before his presence with singing.
- 3 Know ye that the LORD he is God :
It is he that hath made us, and we are his ;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

- 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise :
Give thanks unto him, and bless his name.
- 5 For the LORD is good ; his mercy *endureth* for ever ;
And his faithfulness unto all generations.

HERE ends what Hengstenberg describes as a decalogue of Psalms (91-100), all intended to exhibit the relation between Israel and the world at large ; all of a cheering and triumphant character, without the slightest intermixture of complaint or lamentation ; all crowded with citations from the older Scriptures, or allusions to them : almost all pointing to a glorious theophany still future ; and almost all distinguished by emphatic repetitions, and the frequent use of musical terms, especially the names of instruments. That these Psalms are not thrown together at random is apparent from the fact that the series begins with a general assurance of Divine protection (Psalm 91), and of God's power both to save the righteous and destroy the wicked (Psalm 92), followed by variations on the grand theme that the Lord reigneth (Psalms 93-99), and closing with an earnest exhortation to the whole world to receive Him as their Sovereign (Psalm 100). According to Hengstenberg, these ten Psalms are in psalmody what the later chapters of Isaiah (40-66) are in prophecy ; and as the former are undoubtedly anterior to the exile, they confirm the genuineness of the latter. A.

If we are right in regarding Psalms 93-99 as forming one continuous series, one great prophetic oratorio, whose title is "Jehovah is

King," and through which there runs the same great idea, this Psalm may be regarded as the doxology which closes the strain. We find lingering in it notes of the same great harmony. It breathes the same gladness ; it is filled with the same hope, that all nations shall bow down before Jehovah, and confess that He is God. "Among the Psalms of triumph and thanksgiving this stands pre-eminent, as rising to the highest point of joy and grandeur. No local restrictions, no national exclusiveness, can find place in the contemplation of God as the common Creator and Father of man ; hence it is that no hymn or Psalm in any subsequent age has found a readier response than this first appeal to the whole world to unite in worshipping Jehovah on the ground of common sonship and humanity." (*The Psalms Chronologically Arranged.*) P.

Luther would have immortalized his name had he done no more than written the majestic air and harmony to which we are accustomed to sing this Psalm, and which, when the mind is in a truly worshipping frame, seems to bring heaven down to earth, and to raise earth to heaven, giving us anticipations of the pure and sublime delights of that noble and general assembly in which saints and angels shall forever celebrate the praises of God. *Cobb'n.*

1. All the earth. As in all the preceding

Psalms, so here the hope of the Psalmist goes far beyond the narrow limits of his own people and country. The blessing of Abraham is become the heritage of the Gentiles. The whole world is to acknowledge Jehovah, and to rejoice before Him. P.

3. The Lord He is God. The only living and true God ; He is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being. He is our *Creator* : "*It is He that hath made us.*" Therefore, *He is our rightful owner.* "*We are His people,*" or subjects, and He is our Prince, our Governor, that gives laws to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. *He is our bountiful Benefactor* ; we are not only His sheep whom He is entitled to, but "*the sheep of His pasture,*" whom He takes care of. H.—In "*He made us and we are His,*" there is also a rich mine of comfort and of admonition, for the Creator is also the Owner, His heart clings to His creature, and the creature owes itself entirely to Him, without whom it would not have had a being, and would not continue in being. D.

God hath given us a soul to inform us ; senses to inform our soul ; faculties to furnish that soul ; understanding, the great surveyor of the secrets of nature and grace ; fantasy and invention, the master of the works ; memory, the great keeper or master of the rolls of the soul, a power that can make amends for the speed of time, in causing him to leave behind him those things which else he would so carry away as if they had not been ; will, which is the lord paramount in the state of the soul, the commander of our actions, the elector of our resolutions ; judgment, which is the great counsellor of the will ; affections, which are the servants of them both ; a body, fit to execute the charge of the soul, so wondrously disposed as that every part hath best opportunity in his own functions, and is fit to serve the soul and maintain itself. *Bishop H.*

Sheep of His pasture. The true sheep are identified by certain marks, partly in themselves as the experience of believing souls, and partly in the feelings and purposes of Christ toward them. Tholuck has grouped together these marks under the following heads : They understand Christ's call ; He knows them by their sympathy ; they direct themselves by His will ; He gives them eternal life ; they never lose it ; no power can snatch them away from Him. If we hear the Saviour's voice, and follow Him with a loving, trusting obedience whithersoever He leadeth, we may safely leave to Him our guidance, our protection, our final salvation.

The one thing which concerns us is, that we do truly follow Him. J. P. T.

4. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving. In all our public service the rendering of thanks must abound ; it is like the incense of the temple which filled the whole house with smoke. Expiatory sacrifices are ended, but those of gratitude will never be out of date. So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks. Mercy permits us to enter His gates ; let us praise that mercy. S.—'Tis great reason that we should continue to pray, because our wants continue ; and 'tis as great reason that we should continue to praise, because our mercies continue. Who is there so full that wants nothing ? and who so empty, but hath something ? Let none give over praying, but he that wants nothing ; and let none give over praising that hath anything. Is not the mercy we want worth asking ? and is not the mercy we receive worth the acknowledging ? *Venning.*

There is no such way to get much grace as to be thankful for a little grace. He who opens his mouth wide in praise shall have his heart filled with grace. *T. Brooks.*—Thanksgiving makes our prayers bold and strong and sweet ; feeds and enkindles them as with coals of fire. *Luther.*—Our whole life should speak forth our thankfulness ; every condition and place we are in should be a witness of our thankfulness ; this will make the time and place we live in the better for us ; when we ourselves are monuments of God's mercy, it is fit we should be patterns of His praises and leave monuments to others ; we should think life is given to us to do something better than to live in ; we live not to live ; our life is not the end of itself, but the praise of the Giver. *R. Sibbes.*

The spirit of thankfulness develops breadth of character. Generosity and large-heartedness are the flowers of the seed of gratitude. Gratitude puts a man in sympathy with all men. Gratitude helps him to understand human conditions, weigh motives, and appreciate principles and methods. Thanklessness is seclusive and exclusive. Thanklessness develops narrowness of character. Thanklessness seems to crowd one into his own little cell of self. The living a life of thankfulness promotes generosity. The ungrateful man feels that all is his and therefore he may keep all. The grateful man feels that all that is his has come from God and therefore he must use it as God wills. . . . Thankfulness deepens life in itself. Thankfulness broadens life among men. Thankfulness also heightens life, lifting it Godward. It thus

gives the third range of development and completes character. Deep, broad, high; this is life's perfect cube. Deep in yourself, broad in touching men, high in aspiring Godward. May such be the influence of the spirit of thankfulness upon each. "In everything give thanks." *C. F. Thwing.*

4, 5. The men of all people shall enter the gates of His temple with thanksgiving and the courts of His temple with praise, in order to join in the worship of the Church, which—a creation of Jehovah for the good of the whole earth—is gathered around this temple and has it as the place of its worship. The pilgrimage of all peoples to the holy mountain is the Old Testament way of expressing the hope of the conversion of all peoples to the God of revelation and the close union of all with the people of this God. His temple is open to them all. They may enter into it; and, if they do so, they have great things to look for. For the God of revelation and His grace and faithfulness endure forever. The grace of God is the liberality, and His faithfulness the constancy of His love. D.

His mercy is everlasting. The everlasting, unchangeable mercy of God is the first motive of our turning to Him and of our continuing steadfast in His covenant, and it shall be the subject of unceasing praise in eternity. As the Lord is good and His mercy everlasting, so the full perfection of these attributes in a perfect state will call forth praise unwearied from hearts that never faint. *W. Wilson.*—

The summons to praise, in public, in His earthly courts, is based most appropriately on His goodness, which no human words can adequately express; on His everlasting mercy, and on His truth; *i.e.*, faithfulness to His promises, which endureth age after age in unwaning strength, always reliable; never failing. C.

We can wish the reader nothing more beatific in this life than to have found and fully brought into feeling the practical significance of this eternal act or fact of God, which we call the Christian Trinity. Nowhere else do the bonds of limitation burst away as here. Nowhere else does the soul launch upon immensity as here; nowhere fill her burning censer with the eternal fires of God, as when she sings:

"One inexplicably three,
One in simplest unity."

Who that has been able, in some frame of holy longing after God, to clear the petty shackles of logic and the paltry quibbles of a world-wise speculation, committing his soul up freely to the inspiring impulse of this Divine mystery as it is celebrated in some grand doxology of Christian worship, and has so been lifted into conscious fellowship with the great celestial minds, in their higher ranges of beatitude and their shining tiers of glory, has not known it as being at once the deepest, highest, widest, most enkindling, and most practical of all practical truths? *Bushnell.*

PSALM CI.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 I WILL sing of mercy and judgment :
Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing praises.
2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way :
Oh when wilt thou come unto me ?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
3 I will set no base thing before mine eyes :
I hate the work of them that turn aside ;
It shall not cleave unto me.
4 A froward heart shall depart from me :
I will know no evil thing.

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I destroy :
Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer.
6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me :
He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall minister unto me.
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house :
He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.

8 Morning by morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land ;

To cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the LORD.

THIS Psalm has been styled "the godly purposes and resolves of a king." It opens with the joyful contemplation of God's mercy and justice as kingly virtues, in their measure and degree to be manifested in earthly kings. It then records the king's pious resolve to keep his own heart and life unspotted, and to remove from him all that might lead him astray. Yet scarcely has he uttered the resolve when, reflecting on all that such a resolve implies, he breaks forth in the earnest cry that God Himself would come to him and take up His dwelling with him, giving him grace to walk in "a perfect way." Thus having consecrated himself and his house, he declares further how he will provide for the purity of his court. With jealous care he will exclude those who are the bane of king's houses, the slanderer, the proud, the deceitful, the liar. None but the faithful ; none but those who, like himself, walk in a perfect (*i.e.*, blameless) way, shall be admitted to places of honor and trust about his person. Finally, the work of zealous reformation shall extend to his capital, the city of Jehovah, and to the utmost borders of the land, that he may see realized under his sway the great ideal, "Ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." All this falls in admirably with the early part of David's reign, and the words are just what we might expect from one who came to the throne with a heart so true to his God. P.—One who begins his reign with thoughts and resolutions such as these may well look for a happy termination of it, and nothing shows us more clearly the true nobleness of David's soul than this short Psalm. It is the spontaneous, inartificial expression of feelings long restrained ; feelings and purposes, however, which form in themselves a whole, and which therefore naturally, and without effort, appear as a whole in the Psalm, and give it the unity which it possesses. *Ewald.*

This is the Psalm which the old expositors used to designate "The Mirror for Magistrates," and an excellent mirror it is. It would mightily accelerate the coming of the time when every nation shall be Christ's possession, and every capital a "City of the Lord," if all magistrates could be persuaded to dress themselves by it every time they go forth to perform the functions of their godlike office. *W. Binnie.*

This Psalm has been appropriately called "The Householder's Psalm ;" and assuredly if

every master of a family would regulate his household by these rules of the conscientious Psalmist, there would be a far greater amount, not merely of domestic happiness and comfort, but of fulfilment of the serious and responsible duties which devolve on the respective members of a household. *Bouchier.*

1. God's providences concerning His people are commonly mixed—*mercy and judgment* ; God has set the one over against the other and appointed them April days, showers and sunshine. Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God and sing praises to Him ; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition, must put us out of tune for sacred songs. H.—The severity of God is tempered by His goodness ; and His goodness, like the bow in the cloud, is brightened by the background of severity. Alike in nature, in the Bible, and in Providence, the awful and the gentle, the severe and the gracious, are blended together. J. P. T.

The pillars of the state are *mercy and judgment*. The throne of the King is borne up by them, as Solomon's was with lions of ivory on each side. Therefore, as in one place it is said that "*the throne is established by justice*" (Prov. 16 : 12) ; so in another that it is "*upheld by mercy*" (Prov. 20 : 28) ; justice being as the bones and sinews in the body politic, and mercy as the veins and arteries. They are the two hands of action, the two eyes of virtue, and the two wings of honor. *G. Hakerwell.*

Mercy and judgment are the two sides of the Divine character as it is revealed by God and apprehended by men. They are the two attributes which lie over against each other, for conflict or in harmony, according to the conditions in which they are exercised, or the point from which they are viewed. They intimate that God is merciful and that God is just. On the one hand, both these attributes are ascribed to Him throughout the Scriptures ; on the other hand, both are more or less clearly mirrored in the human conscience. The subject of the song is not one or the other, but both united. Their nature, as manifested to men, is essentially determined by their union. Neither mercy nor justice alone and apart could become the theme of praise in the lips of men. We could not sing them separately. Their union takes place in Christ crucified. In Him the promises of God

are Yea and Amen. In the Substitute mercy and justice meet. Christ is the unspeakable gift; God is love. The design and effect of the sacrifice of Jesus is that God may be just, and the Justifier of him who believeth on Jesus. *Arnot.*

What a beautifully woven web of judgment and mercy does every man's secret history in his way through the wilderness of life to the land of promise, present! and how good, and how wholesome, and how kindly, and how gracious is this blessed intermingling of both! How do we need the judgment to keep us humble and watchful and pure! and how do we need the mercy to keep us hopeful, and to nerve our efforts, and to stir our hearts, and to sustain us in patience amid life's battle and struggle and disappointment and vexation! Oh, how good it is for us, that we should thus, therefore, have the rod and staff together, the rod to chasten, and the staff to solace and sustain! How good it is for us that we should have to "*sing of mercy and judgment!*" And yet, what is judgment itself, but mercy with a sterner aspect? And what are the chidings of judgment, but the sterner tones of the voice of a Father's love? For even judgment is one of the "all things" that "work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." *Hugh Stowell.*

Of mercy and judgment. And who among us has not the same mingled strain to utter? Who can say that His mercies have not been tempered with the gentle but solemn reminders of judgment at God's hand? Our very proverbs tell us of this: no day without its cloud; no rose without its thorn. And who can say, on the other hand, that His judgments have not been most tenderly mixed with mercies? Our song may well, then, be of mercy and judgment; of His dealings toward us who, when He blesses, also chastises, lest we should forget Him; who, when He chastises, also blesses, lest we should distrust Him. *Arnold.*

How few our miseries to the number of our mercies; how far have our blessings exceeded our afflictions; our nights of sleep, those of wakefulness; our hours of health, those of sickness; our many gains, the few losses we have suffered? For every blow, how many blessings! and even when He smote with one hand, did not a gracious God hold up with the other? Who has not to sing much more of mercies than of judgments? Is there ever a month, a week, a day, an hour, a moment, a single moment, when from Thy blessed and bountiful hand, O God! mercies are not falling in showers, thick

as the rain-drops that shimmer in sunlight on the water, or as the snow-flakes that fill the wintry air! *Guthrie.*

To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them; to bless Him for miseries is the way to remove them. No good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured. *Dyer.*

2. After propounding as his theme the mercy and justice of the Lord, the Psalmist announces his determination to be blameless in his own walk (vs. 2-4), and so to exercise his power over others as to favor the godly and drive out the wicked (vs. 5-8). *A.*

2. *I will behave myself wisely.* The first thing he vows touching himself is wise behavior; prudence, not sapience; not wise contemplation, but wise action. It is not wise thoughts, or wise speaking, or wise writing, or wise gesture and countenance, will serve the turn, but wise behavior; the former are graceful, but the other needful. *Hakewell.*

"O when wilt Thou come unto me?" an ejaculation, but not an interruption. He feels the need not merely of Divine help, but also of the Divine presence, that so he may be instructed and sanctified and made fit for the discharge of his high vocation. *S.*—It bursts forth from the heart, moved and stirred to its inmost centre, as it thinks of all the height and depth of that resolve to "walk in a perfect way." How shall a frail son of man keep his integrity? The task is too great for his own strength, honest and sincere as the resolution is, and therefore he cries, "When wilt Thou come unto me?" come to be my abiding guest, come not only to dwell in Zion, in Thy tabernacle, but with me Thy servant, in my house and in my heart (compare John 14:23), giving me the strength and the grace that I need? *P.*—"O when wilt thou come unto me?" involves the prayer, Grant me fresh manifestations of favor. Come near to me to dwell with me and to aid me in maintaining the life of devoted service to Thee which I now solemnly purpose. *C.*

I will walk within my house. Much, though not all of the power of godliness lies within doors. It is in vain to talk of holiness if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. It is sad when they that have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us, do speak least for our godliness! David knew very well how near this part of a saint's duty lies to the very heart of godliness; and, therefore, when he makes his solemn vow to walk holily before God, he instanteth this as one stage wherein he might eminently

discover the graciousness of his spirit ; “ *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* ” Gurnall.—With a perfect heart ; literally, “ in the integrity of my heart. ” So “ a perfect way ” might be rendered “ the way of integrity. ” P.

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way abroad. Notice that these words are a part of a song, and that there is no music like the harmony of a gracious life, no Psalm so sweet as the daily practice of holiness. S.—In Christendom the family is a different and a more beautiful thing than it was in David’s time. Each father of a family can, by God’s help, say, with David, that he will walk in his house with a perfect heart. To every head of a household has been committed a great power of influencing those about him for good. Influence them in some way he certainly will ; if not for good, then for evil. H. P. L.

3. I will not allow myself to look on any wickedness lest the sight of the eye should bring temptation to my soul. I hate the doing of unrighteousness ; it shall find no sympathy in me. My heart shall not cleave to it. I hate the doing, and [by implication] the spirit of apostasy from God. C.—Deviations from truth, from integrity, from that Divine law by which he rules himself, shall not “ cleave ” to him. Temptations to such a course may beset him. The whisper might come : policy requires this course ; craft must be met by craft ; power is given to be used ; kings are above law, and the like. But he refuses to listen to the whisper. P.

That religion is not real which does not claim for its dominion daily life and common duties. To serve the Lord in sincerity and truth, we must serve Him in those posts of occupation He has assigned us here below. The merchant must serve Him in the way he transacts his business, and the merchant’s clerk in the way he keeps his employer’s books and watches for his employer’s interest. The scholar must serve the Lord in the intensity with which he applies his mind, and in the thoroughness with which he conquers his subject or achieves his task. The workingman must serve the Lord by striving to be the most accomplished in all his craft, the fastest, the most solid, the most finished hand in all that field of labor ; and the man who undertakes a learned profession should grudge no study and spare no pains till he has reached professional optimism, and made it every man’s

interest who wants the best assistance or the best advice, to take it from the Christian physician, the Christian lawyer, or the Christian teacher. Our true life is our daily life. Hamilton.

4, 5. He is full of a stern exclusiveness, of a noble intolerance, not against theological error, not against uncourtly manners, not against political insubordination, but against the proud heart, the high look, the secret slanderer, the deceitful worker, the teller of lies. These are the outlaws from King David’s court ; these are the rebels and heretics whom he would not suffer to dwell in his house or tarry in his sight. Stanley.

4. *A froward heart shall depart from me.* He refers both to himself and to those round about him ; he would neither be crooked in heart himself, nor employ persons of evil character in his house. He who begins with his own heart begins at the fountain-head, and is not likely to tolerate evil companions. S.

5. Having declared what his own course of life should be, he now describes the conduct which he should require in his confidential servants. Here again the statement is both negative and positive, but in this case beginning with the former. A.—“ *Privily slandereth ;* ” literally, he that *tongueth* his neighbor secretly. “ *Will I not suffer,* ” is properly, “ him I cannot,” i.e., cannot live with, cannot bear about me. C.

In slander the listener is almost as bad as the speaker. The only true thing is to shut your ears the moment you begin to hear from any one an evil report of another. The person has no right to tell it to you, and you have no right to hear it. Courtesy requires that we be patient listeners, even to dull and prosy talkers ; but even courtesy may not require us to listen to evil reports about a neighbor. J. R. M.—Slander cannot make the subject of it either better or worse ; it may represent us in a false light, or place a likeness of us in a bad light, but we are the same. Not so the slanderer ; for calumny always makes the calumniator worse, but never the calumniated. Colton.

6. Those who are not faithful to God will not be likely to be faithful to men ; if we are faithful ourselves, we shall not care to have those about us who cannot speak the truth or fulfil their promises ; we shall not be satisfied until all the members of our family are upright in character. S.

6, 7. The home must be safe. It must be a sanctuary, where there is nothing to hurt or destroy. It is a great and life-long benefit when

life's outset is passed in an atmosphere of truth and openness, and nothing is more disastrous than that system of false threatening and coercion which makes its little victims both incredulous and superstitious, both cowardly and cunning. Be yourself fair, candid, evenly-minded, making it easy to others to tell the truth, listening to both sides of the story, and careful to judge righteous judgment. And keep out all that has the opposite tendency. Whether as the servants who abide or the acquaintances who visit, let your eyes be on the excellent of the land, and the immoral and irreverent exclude as you would exclude contagion. And although

life should not be all regulation any more than a park should all be paling, yet like the fence which surrounds the little tree, like the hoops which hold the staves together, good rules create good habits; the regular hours, the family prayer, the timely return at night, the collective upgoing to the house of God. *Hamilton.*

8. Morning by morning. Day by day will he exercise his work of righteous judgment, purging out all ungodliness from the holy city. He will have a pure state, a pure city, as the writer of the one hundred and fourth Psalm hopes to see a pure earth (v. 35), without spot or stain of sin. P.

PSALM CII.

A PRAYER OF THE AFFLICTED, WHEN HE IS OVERWHELMED, AND POURETH OUT HIS COMPLAINT BEFORE THE LORD.

- 1 HEAR my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come unto thee.
- 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day of my distress :
Incline thine ear unto me ;
In the day when I call answer me speedily.
- 3 For my days consume away like smoke,
And my bones are burned as a firebrand.
- 4 My heart is smitten like grass, and withered ;
For I forgot to eat my bread.
- 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning
My bones cleave to my flesh.
- 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness ;
I am become as an owl of the waste places.
- 7 I watch, and am become
Like a sparrow that is alone upon the housetop.
- 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day ;
They that are mad against me do curse by me.
- 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping.
- 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath :
For thou hast taken me up, and cast me away.
- 11 My days are like a shadow that declineth ;
And I am withered like grass.
- 12 But thou, O LORD, shalt abide for ever ;

- And thy memorial unto all generations.
- 13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion :
For it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come.
- 14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And have pity upon her dust.
- 15 So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth thy glory :
- 16 For the LORD hath built up Zion,
He hath appeared in his glory ;
- 17 He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute,
And hath not despised their prayer.
- 18 This shall be written for the generation to come :
And a people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.
- 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary ;
From heaven did the LORD behold the earth ;
- 20 To hear the sighing of the prisoner ;
To loose those that are appointed to death ;
- 21 That men may declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And his praise in Jerusalem ;
- 22 When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

23 He weakened my strength in the way ;
 He shortened my days.
 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the
 midst of my days :
 Thy years are throughout all generations.
 25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the
 earth ;
 And the heavens are the work of thy hands.
 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure :

Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment ;
 As a vesture shalt thou change them, and
 they shall be changed :
 27 But thou art the same,
 And thy years shall have no end.
 28 The children of thy servants shall continue,
 And their seed shall be established before
 thee.

THIS Psalm must have been written by one of the exiles in Babylon, probably toward the close of the captivity, when the hope of a return seemed no longer doubtful. In mournful strains he describes his bitter lot. Sorrow and pain had been very busy with him. But when he looks away from his sorrow, a prospect so bright and so glorious opens before him, that in the thought of it all else is swallowed up and forgotten. Zion's deliverance is at hand. Her God has not forsaken her. The grounds on which his hope rests are broad and manifold ; for Jehovah is the everlasting King (v. 12) ; the time fixed in His counsels is come (v. 13) ; the hearts of her children are moved with a more passionate longing for her restoration (v. 14) ; the prayer of His suffering people has prevailed, the sighing of the prisoner has entered into His ears (vs. 17, 19, 20). A new nation shall be born in Zion, and other nations and kingdoms shall be gathered into her to praise Jehovah (vs. 18, 21, 22). Once again, as for a moment, the sadness of the exile and the sufferer prevails. His life is ebbing away, his heart and his flesh fail. Shall he be permitted to look upon that glory with the thought of which he has been comforting himself, the vision of which has been passing before his eyes ? "Oh my God, take me not away in the midst of my days !" is the natural and touching petition which breaks from his lips, as he fears lest his eyes should be closed in death before that glory appears. And then suddenly, as if every cloud of apprehension were dispelled, he triumphs in the thought that there is One who changeth not ; that though the solid frame of the universe itself should crumble into dissolution, yet he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," the one hope and stay of His children now and in all generations to come.

On the Messianic character of the Psalm, and the quotation made from it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, see the remarks at the end on vs. 25-27. It is strange that this quotation should have been passed over without any notice, not only by commentators like De Wette and Hup-

feld, but even by Calvin, Tholuck, and Hengstenberg. This Psalm is clearly individual, not national ; and must have been intended for private rather than liturgical use, as the inscription seems designed to inform us. This inscription is peculiar ; it stands quite alone among the titles prefixed to the Psalms ; for it describes the character of the Psalm, and marks the circumstances under which it should be used. In all other instances the inscriptions are either musical or historical. Besides the prologue (vs. 1, 2), and the epilogue (vs. 23-28), the Psalm consists of two main divisions—the complaint (vs. 3-11), and the consolation (vs. 12-22). P.

2. *In the day when I call answer me speedily.* We may ask to have answers to prayer as soon as possible, but we may not complain of the Lord if He should think it more wise to delay. We have permission to request and to use importunity, but no right to dictate or to be petulant. If it be important that the deliverance should arrive at once, we are quite right in making an early time a point of our entreaty, for God is as willing to grant us a favor now as to-morrow, and He is not slack concerning His promise. S.

6. *I resemble a pelican of the wilderness ; I am become like an owl (haunting) ruins.* The simple idea conveyed by these figures is that of extreme loneliness and desolation. Beyond the fact that they inhabit solitudes, the natural history of the birds mentioned is of no exegetical importance. **7.** *I have watched, and have been like a sparrow dwelling alone upon a house-top.* A.—These birds are chosen to represent his case because they frequent old ruins, the most desolate localities, and in the night. This afflicted one is a desolate, dreary mourner, sleepless and lonely. C.

Alone. But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth ; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth it a little : "*magna civitas, magno solitudo ;*"

because in a great town friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighborhoods; but we may go further, and affirm most truly that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity. *Bacon.*—See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows are never very sorrowful. *T. Rogers.*

10. The acknowledgment is the same as in Psalm 90: 7-9. It is sin which has thus provoked God's displeasure; the two nouns, "indignation" and "wrath," are in the Hebrew the strongest which the language possesses. *D.*

11. "A shadow that declineth" is literally a shadow *stretched out*, as shadows lengthen rapidly just when they are taking their flight. Wasting grief, perhaps sickness, is cutting short his days. *C.*—My days (my term of life) are as the lengthened shade, the lengthening shade of evening, that shows the near approach of night. The comparison, though not strictly expressed, is beautifully suggestive of the thought intended. *Conant.*—Seneca well says, that "though death is before the old man's face, yet he may be as near the young man's back." Man's life is the shadow of smoke, the dream of a shadow. One doubts whether to call it a dying life or a living death. *T. Brooks.*

Withered like grass. Heart-break has a marvellously withering influence over our entire system; our flesh at its best is but as grass, and when it is wounded with sharp sorrows, its beauty fades, and it becomes a shrivelled, dried, uncomely thing. *S.*

12. BUT THOU. This is the great consolatory thought by which he rises above his sorrow. He, the individual, may perish, but Zion's hopes rest on her eternal King. And yet this might seem, as Calvin remarks, a far-fetched consolation. What is it to us that God changeth not, that He sitteth King forever, if meanwhile our own condition is so frail and feeble that we cannot continue for a moment in one stay? His unchangeable peace and blessedness do but make our life seem the more complete mockery. But the Psalmist recalls God's promises to His Church, especially that great

covenant promise, "I will dwell in the midst of you" (Ex. 25: 8). Resting on this, he feels sure that God's children, however miserable their state, shall have their share in that heavenly glory wherein God dwelleth. Because God changes not, His promise and covenant change not, and therefore we may ever lift our eyes to His throne in heaven, from which He will surely stretch forth His hand to us. *P.*—This is my comfort—nay more, my joy—that my God lives, and will live forever. "*Thy memorial name.*" Hebrew usage favors this sense. The meaning then would be that the faithfulness and love expressed in that memorial name (Jehovah) shall endure through all generations. God not only lives forever, but will be forever the same faithful, loving God, the everlasting hope and joy of His trustful people. *C.*

Our days are as a shadow that declineth; but faith exclaims, "Thou shalt abide forever." Unchangeable as God's being is also His covenant; and of all the promises which He has made to the soul that seeks salvation, not one shall ever be withdrawn. Yea, the work of His grace does not share in the sentence of decay, wherefore we bow the head in adoration. God's work in our heart does not wither like the grass, but ever blossoms fairer; and that which He has done for His name and kingdom, through our means, survives the feeble instrument, and is carried on by others. *Van O.*

13, 14. Nothing is more certain than that God will rise for mercy to Zion *when* His appointed time shall have come, which time is in the Divine plan and cannot fail. So also the set time will surely have come *when* God's servants shall manifest their sympathy with her ruined stones and give themselves with all their souls to her rebuilding. God's set time will be indicated by the hearts of His people. Let it not be overlooked that this faith in God's returning to rebuild Zion lifts the load of grief from this smitten sufferer's heart. Inspired by such faith and hope he can bear anything; he practically knows no more any sorrow. The logical relations of thought in the passage are also richly instructive. God will arise to restore Zion, *for* the thing is fixed in His mind; will thus arise *when* this time shall have come; and it will have come, you may know, *when* His servants give the love of their heart to Zion and the power of their hand to her work. Plainly the writer lived at a point where he saw, present, or in the near prospect, the desolation of Zion, and in the certain future, her glorious restoration. *C.*

14. Jerusalem itself affords at this day a

touching illustration of this passage. There is reason to believe that a considerable portion of the *lower part* of the walls which enclose the present mosque of Omar, which occupies the site of the ancient Jewish temple, are the same, or at least the southern, western, and eastern sides are the same as those of Solomon's temple. At one part where the remains of this old wall are the most considerable and of the most massive character—where two courses of masonry, composed of massive blocks of stone, rising to the height of thirty feet—is what is called the Wailing Place of the Jews. "Here," says Dr. Olin, "at the foot of the wall, is an open place paved with flags, where the Jews assemble every Friday, and in small numbers on other days, for the purpose of praying and bewailing the desolations of their holy places. Neither the Jews nor Christians are allowed to enter the Haram, which is consecrated to Mohammedan worship, and this part of the wall is the nearest approach they can make to what they regard as the precise spot within the forbidden enclosure upon which the ancient temple stood. They keep the pavement swept with great care, and take off their shoes, as on holy ground. Standing or kneeling with their faces toward the ancient wall, they gaze in silence upon its venerable stones, or pour forth their complaints in half-suppressed, though audible tones. This, to me, was always a most affecting sight, and I repeated my visit to this interesting spot to enjoy and sympathize with the melancholy yet pleasing spectacle." *Kitto*.

16. The Lord in His glory. The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world; God is glorious when the world sees Him not, but His declarative glory then appears when the glory of His mercy, truth, and faithfulness break forth in His people's salvation. *Gurnall*.

17. *He has turned unto the prayer of the destitute, and has not despised their prayer.* This verse continues to assign the reason why the nations and their kings will be struck with awe—viz., because this great and glorious God has turned round, as it were, and listened to the prayer of the destitute and granted their petition. The word translated *destitute* occurs only here and in Jer. 17: 6; but from its etymological affinities and its intensive form, appears to mean naked, and then figuratively, stripped of everything, impoverished, entirely destitute. *A*.

"The prayer of the destitute"—in Hebrew,

the *naked* one, the most utterly destitute and helpless. When His people have this feeling and come before God in conscious want and conscious weakness, yet taking hold of His strength as their legitimate hope, God will never despise their prayer. *C*.—The heart often prays most fervently when the lips are dumb or wholly inaudible. It is not the eloquent tongue that we want, but the humble and anxious heart. If we have deep wants felt within, the heart will speak should the lips be dumb. And God hears heart-prayer; He is not dependent upon its outward and eloquent expression. In His ear the publican's first cry, the thief's word, rose with infinite and perfect acceptance, and brought down an answer exceeding abundant above all that they could ask or think. *Cumming*.

18. The written record of God's merciful purpose. *Written* in this Psalm, as well as in the foregoing Scriptures. *For the after age.* This refers to the future unto its remotest ages. *A people created* (Isa. 43: 7). This has its grand fulfilment in the Christian Church. *M*.—The Gospel of the saving deeds wrought by God shall be committed to writing for the generations to come, and a created people, *i.e.*, a new people coming into existence, the Church of the future, shall praise God the Redeemer for it. *D*.

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner.* God takes notice not only of the prayers of His afflicted people, which are the language of grace; but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. *H*.

23-27. Again he returns to the contrast between his own weakness and the brevity of human life, on the one hand, and the eternity and unchangeableness of God on the other (see above, vs. 11, 12), finding in this his perfect satisfaction and rest. *P*.—The sentiment is grand. Human life is too short for man to form and execute great plans; for how often is his strength cut off in the midst of his work? But God's years roll on forever. The sun and the stars will fade out, but His strength remains unwasted forevermore! "Thou art the same," literally, Thou art *He*—an expressive affirmation of God's changeless being—forevermore Thou art *He*—all there is in God remaining forever the same. It is remarkable that the writer to the Hebrews (1: 10-12) assumes that this passage ascribes Creatorship to the Son of God. This obviously implies that God as revealed to His people under the name Jehovah, the great "*I Am*," was really the eternal Son. *C*.

24. The abrupt transition in this verse is full

of pathetic beauty. The prayer that his life may not be prematurely cut short seems to spring in this instance not merely from a natural clinging to life (as in Hezekiah's case), but from the intense desire to see God's glory manifested in Israel's restoration. Then, having uttered that prayer, without waiting for the answer, he magnifies God's eternity and unchangeableness. He finds in these his strength in weakness; he feels that he can rest on the everlasting arms. He draws his highest consolation from the thought that though he himself may perish, cut off in the midst of his days; though the heavens and the earth may be changed, and wax old as a garment; yet He who created them is ever the same, that His purposes cannot be frustrated, that His Church, the children of His servants, shall abide, the witness and the monument of His love. P.

My God. The pronoun *my* is as much worth to the soul as the boundless portion. Luther saith, Much religion lieth in pronouns. All our consolation, indeed, consisteth in this pronoun. It is the cup which holdeth all our cordial waters. This pronoun is the door at which the King of saints entereth into our hearts, with His whole train of delights and comforts. *Swinnock.*

Take me not away in the midst of my days. This is an earnest, impassioned prayer, a prayer against death; and the fact which gives it its earnestness and impassioned energy is that he who offers it is in "the midst of his days." Men in middle life are very apt to look upon death as an improbable event so far as they are concerned, and to make their calculations and shape their course accordingly. Hence it is that they, of all men, are least prepared to die. In them, too, the legitimate effects of the Gospel are rarely seen for the first time. *E. Mason.*

This is a prayer which, with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not *take us away in the midst of our days*, but that, if it be His will, He would spare us to do Him further service, and to be made ripper for heaven. H.—We may lawfully ask for recovery from sickness and may hope to be heard. Good men should not dread death, but they are not forbidden to love life; for many reasons the man who has the best hope of heaven, may nevertheless think it desirable to continue here a little longer, for the sake of his family, his work, the Church of God, and even the glory of God itself. S.

The prayer is a request for a complete life. The wish is submitted to the will of God; for

the man is a believer, and is ready to accept life in the form in which God orders it. He feels that there can be no real life without God, but that with Him it is certain to have a perfect and happy issue. A complete life has in it the doing some service to God and His world. We are here not merely to find God's favor, but to do God's work. So there are degrees of completeness even in Christian lives. They all reach the haven, but some with fuller sail and richer freight. In the Psalmist's contrast of his days with God's years, there is deep pathos; a sense of his own frailty and evanescence, and yet in the heart of it there is faith and hope. The eternal life of God suggests the thought of His power to grant, and of His immutability to secure, this request. *Ker.*

25-27. In Heb. 1: 10-12 addressed to Christ, and form part of the writer's proof from the Old Testament. The quotation stands between two others, one from the forty-fifth, the other from the one hundred and tenth Psalm, bearing on the same argument. But these are both of them Messianic Psalms, and the principle on which the quotation rests is sufficiently obvious. It is by no means so easy to understand why the words of this Psalm should have been quoted, as it does not seem at first sight to be a Messianic Psalm. It may be observed, however: First, that it is in this sense Messianic, that it looks forward to Israel's redemption from captivity, and the future glory of Zion; second, that there are two great lines of Messianic hope running through the Psalms, the one human, the other Divine; the one of which the reign of the Son of David, the other of which the advent of Jehovah, is the great end and object. Here the Psalmist is occupied with the latter, the appearing of Jehovah in His glory. Third, this identification of the Jesus of the New Testament with the Jehovah of the Old is what we find elsewhere; compare John 12: 41 with Isa. 6 (Isaiah sees the glory of Jehovah; John tells us it was the glory of Christ), and John 19: 37, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced," which in Zech. 12: 10 is language used directly of Jehovah. P.

25. Earth. Heavens. He names here the most stable parts of the world and the most beautiful parts of the creation, those that are freest from corruptibility and change, to illustrate thereby the immutability of God, that though the heavens and earth have a prerogative of fixedness above other parts of the world, and the creatures that reside below, the heavens remain the same as they were created, and the centre of the earth retains its fixedness, and

are as beautiful and fresh in their age as they were in their youth many years ago, notwithstanding the change of the elements. Yet this firmness of the earth and heavens is not to be regarded in comparison of the unmovableness and fixedness of the being of God. As their beauty comes short of the glory of His being, so doth their firmness come short of His stability. *Charnock.*

26. *Wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them.* A garment shows the man, and he is known by it; but also it hides him, that he is not perfectly or fully seen. So are the works of creation unto God, He so far makes them His garment or clothing as in them to give out some instances of His power and wisdom; but He is also hid in them, in that by them no creature can come to the full and perfect knowledge of Him. Now, when this work shall cease, and God shall unclothe or unveil all His glory to His saints, and they shall know Him perfectly, see Him as He is, so far as a created nature is capable of that comprehension, then will He lay them aside and fold them up, at least as to that use, as easily as a man lays aside a garment that he will wear or use no more. This lies in the metaphor. *Owen.*—The frame of nature, yea, the universe itself, is but as a loom for the weaving and unrolling of truth revealing God; and when it shall have answered its present purpose, then it shall be laid aside, just as a loom is taken to pieces when nothing more is to be done with it. It exalts the importance of the material universe, and gives it a grandeur even beyond its own immeasurable wealth of the Divine intelligence revealed in its principles and laws for our study, when we regard it thus as God's loom, the framework for higher designs and a more infinite glory. *Cheever.*

There is no mistaking these scriptural analogies of the past and the future. Earth shall

be rehabilitated; nature shall put on her new robe; there shall be a new creative day, a new firmament, a new glory in the sun and stars, a new Adam, Prince of a new life, a new human kind over whom death shall reign no more, a new Eden-world, "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." *T. Lewis.*

27. *Thou art the same.* Everywhere else we meet with change; the grass springs up and withers; flowers bloom and fade; trees grow and decay. Man in the pride of his glory is swept away. The seasons change, the mountains crumble, the very heavens grow old. The best of men forget their promises or change their purposes. But God is unchangeable. "Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." *M. Simpson.*

The being of creatures is successive; the being of God is permanent, and remains entire, with all its perfections unchanged in an infinite duration. All His perfections are most perfect in Him every moment, before all ages, after all ages. Of a creature it may be said, he was, or he is, or he shall be. Of God it cannot be said but only He is; He is what He always was, and He is what He always will be. Of man it may be said, he is a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is. But God is the same without any succession of parts, and of time; of Him it may be said, He is; He is no more now than He was, and He shall be no more hereafter than He is. *Charnock.*

28. God's servants individually may be cut short of life and die; but their generations shall endure; their children shall rise up to fill their places, and then their children's children, so that God's covenant shall stand and the seed of the righteous be established before God. So the Church has a sort of earthly immortality; God's earthly kingdom shall not end while the world shall stand. *C.*

PSALM CIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 BLESS the LORD, O my soul ;
And all that is within me, <i>bless</i> his holy name.</p> <p>2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits :</p> <p>3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ;
Who healeth all thy diseases ;</p> <p>4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction ;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies :</p> <p>5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things ;
<i>So that</i> thy youth is renewed like the eagle.</p> <p>6 The LORD executeth righteous acts,
And judgments for all that are oppressed.</p> <p>7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
His doings unto the children of Israel.</p> <p>8 The LORD is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.</p> <p>9 He will not always chide ;
Neither will he keep <i>his anger</i> for ever.</p> <p>10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.</p> <p>11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.</p> <p>12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.</p> | <p>13 Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.</p> <p>14 For he knoweth our frame ;
He remembereth that we are dust.</p> <p>15 As for man, his days are as grass ;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.</p> <p>16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.</p> <p>17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children ;</p> <p>18 To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his precepts to do them.</p> <p>19 The LORD hath established his throne in the heavens ;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.</p> <p>20 Bless the LORD, ye angels of his :
Ye mighty in strength, that fulfil his word,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.</p> <p>21 Bless the LORD, all ye his hosts ;
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.</p> <p>22 Bless the LORD, all ye his works,
In all places of his dominion :
Bless the LORD, O my soul.</p> |
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THIS beautiful Psalm is the outpouring of a full heart in thanksgiving to Jehovah for His grace and compassion, both as experienced by the Psalmist in his own life, and also as manifested to his nation in their history. It celebrates especially God's mercy in the forgiveness of sin, and that tender pity, as of a human father, wherewith He remembers the frailty, and stoops to the weakness of His children. It is a hymn of which the text and motto are to be found in that revelation of Himself which God gave to Moses when He proclaimed Himself as "Jehovah," tenderly compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34 : 6).

Nothing certain can be said as to the author and date of the Psalm. P.—Although the

title ascribes it to David, nearly all authorities regard the authorship of this song as doubtful. There is an accumulation of Aramaic forms, such as are found only in the latest Hebrew songs. But there can be no difference of opinion about its beauty and preciousness. *De Witt.*

The Psalm consists of three parts : 1. A prelude, in a strain of trustful gladness, in which the Psalmist seeks to stir up gratitude within him, by the review of God's mercies to him as an individual (vs. 1-5). 2. The body of the poem, in a more reflective tone, full of a quiet, tender, pathetic, even melancholy beauty, in which, after a brief allusion to the facts of the national history, the great covenant relationship of God to His people forms the prominent ground of hope amid human sins and transitori-

ness (vs. 6-18). 3. A triumphant conclusion. Joy in the remembrance of God's goodness to himself and his people predominates over every other feeling. Such a joy must utter itself in praise. Praise seems its natural employment, and therefore the natural employment of all other creatures, which it summons to a holy sympathy and fellowship with itself (vs. 19-22). P.

It is observable that no petition occurs throughout the entire compass of these twenty-two verses. Not a single word of supplication is in the whole Psalm addressed to the Most High. Innumerable blessings had been showered down from above; and, therefore, an overflowing gratitude now bursts forth from their joyful recipient. He touches every chord of his harp and of his heart together, and pours forth a spontaneous melody of sweetest sound and purest praise. *John Stevenson.*

1. All that is within me; not as opposed to outward or mere lip service, but expressing the desire to enlist every thought, faculty, power, the heart with all its affections, the will, the conscience, the reason, in a word, the whole spiritual being, all in man that is best and highest, in the same heavenly service. P.—The literal translation of the form here used is *my inner parts*, the strong and comprehensive meaning of the plural being further enhanced by the addition of *all*, as if to preclude exception and reserve, and comprehend within the scope of the address all the powers and affections. A.

Let your *conscience* "bless the Lord," by unvarying fidelity. Let your *judgment* bless Him, by decisions in accordance with His Word. Let your *imagination* bless Him, by pure and holy musings. Let your *affections* praise Him, by loving whatsoever He loves. Let your *desires* bless Him, by seeking only His glory. Let your *memory* bless Him, by not forgetting any of His benefits. Let your *thoughts* bless Him, by meditating on His excellencies. Let your *hope* praise Him, by longing and looking for the glory that is to be revealed. Let your every *sense* bless Him by its fealty, your every *word* by its truth, and your every *act* by its integrity. *Stevenson.*

His holy name. The purity of God is that which beautifies all His perfections, and renders them worthy to be praised. His eternity, knowledge, and power, without justice, goodness, and truth, might indeed alarm and confound us; but could not inflame our love or engage us to hearty blessing. But when infinite mightiness and unerring wisdom and eter-

nal dominion are mixed with unchangeable love and inviolable veracity and goodness, when thus it becomes a *holy name*, then the Divine perfections are rendered suitable objects of our hope and confidence and loudest songs; hence the Psalmist mentions the purity of God: "*Bless His holy name.*" *W. Dunlap.*

2. Forget not. This touches the secret spring of so much ingratitude—forgetfulness, the want of recollection, or gathering together again of all the varied threads of mercy. P.—'Tis a general fault that the most common and frequent, the most obvious and conspicuous favors of God we commonly little mind or regard; and consequently seldom return due thanks for them. *Barrow.*

If one should give me a dish of sand, and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might feel for them with the finger in vain. But let me take a magnet and sweep through it, and how would that draw to itself the most invisible particles by the mere power of attraction! The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies. But let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find in every hour some heavenly blessings—only the iron in God's sand is gold. *Holmes.*—The grateful spirit alone believes, because it alone acknowledges the source of its life and being, the Author and Fountain-head. The grateful spirit alone finds out God; to it alone He reveals Himself. It alone discovers its glorious Maker in its own faculties, its own perceptions, its own capacities of happiness; and with the grateful one out of the ten, it falls down before Him, giving Him thanks. *Mozley.*

3. Forgiveth, the first and greatest of all the Divine benefits to the soul burdened with a sense of guilt and defilement; therefore also that which calls first for acknowledgment. "God's benefits will not be before our eyes, unless our sins be also before our eyes." (*Augustine.*) P.—Pardon shines first of the stars of mercy. A main reason for this is the fact that *we never enjoy a mercy as a mercy from God till we receive the forgiveness of sins.* And well may the Lord place this mercy first, because, *when it comes, it insures all the rest* *Anon.*

Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted is a present one—*forgiveth*; it is continual, for He still *forgiveth*; it is Divine, for God gives it; it is far-reaching, for it removes *all* our sins; it takes in omissions as

well as commissions, for both these are *in-equities*; and it is most effectual, for it is as real as the healing and the rest of the mercies with which it is placed. S.

Reflect on this, that the first word which the love of God speaks to sinful men is *pardon*; and unless that is your notion of God's love, unless you look to that as the first thing of all, you may have before you a very fair picture of a beautiful, tender, good-natured benevolence, but you have not nearly reached the height of the vigor and yet the tenderness of the Scripture notion of the love of God. It is not a love which says: "Put sin on one side, and give the man the blessings all the same," not a love which has nothing to say about the great fact of transgression, which gives it the go-by and leaves it standing; but a love which passes into the heart through the portal of pardon, a love which grapples with the fact of sin first, and has nothing to say to a man until it has said that message to him. A. M.

When God forgives, He forgives like Himself. The source, the channel, the power, and the standard of forgiveness are all Divine. When God cancels a man's sins, He does so according to the measure in which Christ bore those sins. Christ bore them "all," and, therefore, God forgives "*all*." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." *Anon.*

Three things the true Christian desires with respect to sin: Justification, that it may not condemn; sanctification, that it may not reign; and glorification, that it may not be. *Cecil.*

Healeth thy diseases. *Diseases* or "sicknesses," primarily of body, as in Deut. 29: 21; 2 Chron. 21: 19; and this agrees with what follows. P.—The body experienceth the consequences of Adam's offence, and is subject to many infirmities; but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride, but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but palsy? *Horne.*

4. Crowneth. The love of God not only delivers from sin, disease, and death. He makes His children kings, and weaves their crown out of His own glorious attributes of lovingkindness and tender mercies. P.

There are essential moral intentions in us, weakened, it is true, and perverted by sin, but ready to be awakened and to give their response to the Divine Spirit when He breathes upon them. Deepest among these is the conviction that the pure, and merciful, and tender are beautiful, not only in the human, but in the

Divine; and it is because the Gospel meets this feeling that we are borne to it on the tide of all our spiritual sympathies. The more profoundly and reverently we study our inner nature and the standard of moral judgment which has been there set up, the more we shall feel the need of the revelation of Jesus Christ to give us this full-orbed view of God. It alone discloses depths of compassion transcending even those heights of power, and points us to a Being who crowns His own nature, as He crowns ours, "with lovingkindness and tender mercy." *Ker.*

Every place I have lived in has its monuments of Divine love. Every year and hour of my life has been a time of love. Every friend, neighbor, and even enemy have been the messengers and instruments of love. Every state and change of my life, notwithstanding my sin, have opened to me the treasures and mysteries of love. And shall I doubt whether the same God loves me? *Baxter.*

5. The translation "*mouth*" has no support from Hebrew usage. The word used means elsewhere *ornament, adornment*. Here, apparently, our highest glory as beings—that which gives us our distinguished pre-eminence among the lower orders of creatures, and well translated *soul*, in the same way in which the usual Hebrew word for glory sometimes means soul (Psalm 16: 9). Satisfying the soul with good, renews one's youth like the eagle's. A happy heart doeth good like a medicine. It becomes a good, not to the soul only, but through sympathy, to the body as well. C.

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, rather "filling with good thy soul." No man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God Himself can satisfy even him. Many a worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied. God satisfies the very soul of man, his noblest part, his ornament and glory; and of consequence He satisfies his mouth, however hungry and craving it might otherwise be. Soul-satisfaction loudly calls for soul-praise, and when the mouth is filled with good it is bound to speak good of Him who filled it. Thus is the chain of grace complete. Sin is forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted, then we are honored, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in the household of God. S.

Renewed like the eagle. The only point of comparison with the eagle is its strength and vigor, as in 2 Sam. 1: 23, and the whole verse may be paraphrased as follows: "So completely does His bounty feed thy strength,

that even in old age thou growest young again, and soarest like an eagle." A.—Not meaning a sudden restoration from extreme weakness, but a continued impartation of new life; and the comparison with the eagle is an allusion to the long life through which the early fire and force of the royal bird continue undiminished. *De Witt.*

Thy activity will renew itself like the eagle. That is to say, From day to day he will receive and increase his strength and vigor, so that he may thrive and flourish like the eagle. The comparison with the eagle is not drawn in point of *renovation*, but in point of vigor and activity continually renewing itself; as Isa. 40: 31, says, "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles.*" *Venema.*

6. Rising from personal blessings to general, the comprehensive fact, evermore to the glory of God, is His sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, and His ready and effective interposition in their case. Who will not praise Him that He careth so kindly and so gloriously for those who suffer cruel wrongs from wicked oppressors? C.—Man's injustice shall receive retribution at the hand of God. Mercy to His saints demands vengeance on their persecutors, and He will repay it. No blood of martyrs shall be shed in vain; no groans of confessors in prison shall be left without inquisition being made concerning them. All wrongs shall be righted, all the oppressed shall be avenged. S.

7. His "*ways*" He made known to Moses; to the children of Israel, only "*His acts.*" He showed them His wonderful favors to themselves in the wilderness, and that was His righteousness; but He showed them not His ways and the course He held in them; they saw only the events of things, they saw not the reasons of them, as Moses did. *R. Baker.*

8. His "*slow to anger.*" When mercy cometh into the world, she driveth winged steeds; but when wrath cometh, it walketh with tardy footsteps; it is not in haste to slay, it is not swift to condemn. God's rod of mercy is ever in His hands outstretched; God's sword of justice is in its scabbard, not rusted in it—it can be easily withdrawn—but held there by the hand that presses it back into its sheath, crying, "Sleep, oh sword, sleep; for I will have mercy upon sinners, and will forgive their transgressions." **Plenteous in mercy.** All the world tastes of His sparing mercy, those who hear the Gospel partake of His inviting mercy, the saints live by His saving mercy, are pre-

served by His upholding mercy, are cheered by His consoling mercy, and will enter heaven through His infinite and everlasting mercy. Let grace abounding be our hourly song in the house of our pilgrimage. Let those who feel that they live upon it glorify the plenteous fountain from which it so spontaneously flows. S.

9. He will not always chide. Certainly it is as displeasing to God to chide, as it is to us to be chidden; and so little He likes of anger that He rids His hands of it as fast as He can; He is not so slow in coming to it as quick in getting from it; for chiding is a bar to mercy, and anger an impediment to compassion; nothing is so distasteful to God as that any block should lie in the way of His mercy, or that His compassion should have any cause of restraint. *R. Baker.*—*He will not always chide*, though we always offend and deserve chiding. Though He signify His displeasure against us for our sins by the rebukes of Providence and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet He will have compassion and will not always keep us in pain and terror, but after the spirit of bondage will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide and never know when to cease! What would become of us if God should deal so with us? *He will not keep His anger forever* against His own people, but will gather them with *everlasting mercies* (Isa. 54: 8; 57: 16). H.

10. God is never hard—never afflicts willingly or grieves the children of men, never deals with us *after* our sins, nor rewards us *according* to our iniquities. "God is *faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." When it is "*sorrow upon sorrow*," it is "*strength upon strength*;" and those who know most about affliction will be the readiest to confess what lessons it has taught them of the tenderness and faithfulness of God. *Thorold.*

11. It is proof that the natural man did not invent the Gospel, since he cannot comprehend it. The mercies, like the judgments of God are "*far above out of his sight.*" "*As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.*" *Ker.*—As the lofty heavens canopy the earth, water it with dews and rains, enlighten it with sun, moon, and stars, and look down upon it with unceasing watchfulness, even so the Lord's

mercy from above covers all His chosen, enriches them, embraces them, and stands forever as their dwelling-place. All this mercy is for "*them that fear Him*;" there must be a humble, hearty reverence of His authority, or we cannot taste of His grace. Godly fear is one of the first products of the Divine life in us; it is the beginning of wisdom, yet it fully insures to its possessor all the benefits of Divine mercy, and is, indeed, here and elsewhere, employed to set forth the whole of true religion. S.

12. Removed our transgressions.

The forgiveness of sin (as in v. 3) is the great proof of God's love. "The expression describes, in language which might be that of the New Testament, the effects of justifying grace." (*Delitzsch*.) Compare Micah 7 : 19 : "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;" Isa. 38 : 17 : "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." P.—"*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.*" No word even upon the inspired page can excel this! Sin is removed from us by a miracle of love, removed so far that the distance is incalculable. Then we may be sure that the trace, the very memory of it must be entirely gone. S.

13. As a father. God is our Father because He created and preserves us; He is our Father because He rules us by the loving discipline of His righteous judgment; He is our Father because He is full of love, and forgiveness, and tender, fatherly pity, knowing our frame and remembering that we are dust. Here, then, is a proof of the Divine source whence the inspirations of the Psalmists came. They knew God as their Father because the Spirit of adoption was speaking to their hearts. *G. Forbes.*

As a father pitieth his children.

The father pitieth his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus "the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." H.

The religion of the Psalms and of the Old Testament is no less remarkable for its tenderness than for its severe purity. Heathen poets have sounded the depths of human sorrow, passion, and pity; but nowhere in pagan literature, least of all in the religious books of heathendom, can we catch even the echo of that full-toned tenderness and gracious comfort

which rings through the Hebrew Scriptures, assuring us that the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. *E. R. Conder.*

The Christian has the double armor against anxiety—the name of the Father, and the conviction that the Father's knowledge is co-extensive with the Father's love. He who calls us His children thoroughly understands what His children want. And so, anxiety is contrary to the very name by which we have learned to call God, and to the pledge of pitying care and perfect knowledge of our frame which lies in the words "our Father." Our Father is the name of God, and our Father intensely cares for us, and lovingly does all things for us. A. M.

"*Beloved, now are we children of God.*" Before Him, we are before our Father. Would not an accused child rather appear before his father than before any other judge? Would not his filial instinct tell him that there he could be sure of all patience, tenderness, and tolerance? Would he not draw comfort and confidence from his knowledge that the father knew him, knew all about his dispositions, his training, his circumstances? That is just the assurance which is given us in the fact of God's Fatherhood. We carry our self accusing hearts to our Father. We go as children of God. Such we are; and "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. He knoweth our frame"—how you and I are made up; all our heritages of temper and disposition; all our natural infirmity; all the points where we are weakest against temptation; all our easily-besetting sins. V.

There is nothing so fine in its influence or so sweet in its expression as the authority of love. We yielded loving obedience to it when we were children, as we heard its words from the mouth of mother and father. We never doubted their right to speak it. We never thought it was unnecessary. No more should we when God commands us. God is father and mother to us. His commands are wishes in our behalf, suggestions to us, entreaties, prayers, and whatever else is natural for love to feel and do for those it calls its own. This idea of the commands of God gives the mind a right standpoint from which to see the face and to hear the advice of that heavenly Fatherhood which is over us all in its solicitude, anxiety, and deathless love. *W. H. Murray.*

When God calls Himself our Father, the clouds which conceal Him from our sight seem to break and vanish, and we feel that we can love and honor Him. Above all, we can recog-

nize Him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in Him, and through His incarnation, has adopted us into the highest condition of sonship, and made us heirs with Him of eternal life. *Bishop Goodwin.*

Christ puts that great word "Father" into all our thoughts. He lifts the light of it over the whole universe. And the knowledge and glory of a living, loving, personal Father stream in upon us from every side. When the soul awakens to spiritual consciousness and finds itself in the presence of this great truth of the Fatherhood of God, the first fact which confronts it is a sense of farness from the Father. It is God's mercy that He has not left us to rest in this depth of strangeness. He has made a way for us in Christ—the new and living way by the blood. God's own Son has died to put our estrangement away. "We are no more strangers and foreigners." The blood has brought us near. *A. Macleod.*

Essentially God is the Father of all men; but practically, subjectively, He is not the Father of the man who forgets His existence, overlooks His providence, disregards His requirements, and, in fact, lives "without God in the world." For there are no filial aspirations in the heart of such a man. He has no child like trust or communion. To him there is no spiritual life in the motions of the universe, no expression of infinite tenderness upon its face. Worshipping the objects of sense, he does not notice the intense longings of his own soul. Swept in the sounding tide of passion, he hears not "the still, small voice," inviting to a holier and serener course. God's love is over him, and God's mercy waits on him; but, in his sensualism and sin, he does not see the Father. He does not realize his relationship to God, and therefore, so far as it depends upon his action, that relationship is as though it were not. *Chapin.*—How is it that a father pitieth his children? For long there has been only one son at home, and you might suppose there never had been more than one; all is so complete and orderly, and the new-come servants and the neighbors never speak of any other. But along the high-road there is this instant travelling a haggard figure in tattered clothing, in his looks not much to betoken gentle breeding. But one heart awaits him, and keeps for him the original compartment, warm, ample, and unfilled. Yonder, as he has surmounted the summit of the hill and is gazing down on the long-forsaken homestead and hesitating whether he may venture nearer, which quick eye is that which has recognized him a great

way off, and what eager step is this which runs so fast to meet him, and who is this that in the folds of his kingly mantle hides the ragged wanderer, and clasps him to his bosom, and weeps upon his neck the tears of enraptured affection, and cuts short his confession with a call for the best robe and a command for instant festival? Oh, what a love is this which the heavenly Father hath unto His children! *Hamilton.*

That one word, Father, spoken in faith is better than a thousand prayers in a formal, lukewarm way. I myself have often found that when I can say but this word *Father*, it doth me more good than when I call Him by any other Christian name. *Bunyan.*

14. God "knoweth our frame," for He made it. "He understandeth our thoughts," for the mind from whence they rise is His workmanship. And there is nothing which is a source of pain or uneasiness, of doubt or difficulty, of grief or anguish to His children, which He is not only willing to hear of but desirous that they should tell Him. *Champneys.*

Though God's holiness shames our sinfulness, though God's perfect wisdom dwarfs our folly, nevertheless the safest refuge for the most sinful is perfect holiness; and perfect knowledge joined to perfect love furnishes the strongest assurance to trembling and penitent souls. If that knowledge sees deeper into our sin than we do, it also sees deeper into our weakness. If it weighs the act in more nicely-adjusted scales, it knows what circumstances to throw into the scales. If it knows our most secret faults, it also knows our frame and our frailty. If it discerns aggravations, it equally discerns extenuations. Self-accusing hearts are nowhere so safe as in God's hands; nowhere so sure of justice, but nowhere so sure of tender mercy. *V.*

Maybe when the sincere soul is about a duty he doth it weakly, yet this very willingness of the heart is wonderfully pleasing to God. How doth it affect and take the father, when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing, to see him not stand at the command as hard, but run to it and put forth his whole strength about it! Though at last maybe he cannot do it, yet the willingness of the child pleaseth him so that his weakness rather stirs up the father to pity and help him, than to provoke him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over His disciples' infirmities, "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" Oh! this obedience, that like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes sweetly

on God's palate ; and such is sincere obedience. *Gurnall.*

15, 16. "As for *man*," very frail is he, as the word chosen here for man implies. He is compared to the grass whose natural life is only a few months at longest. As the blossom flowers, so he blossoms for his brief day, the Hebrew beautifully using the same word for the field-blossom and for the man, blossoming. For a breath of air, a gentle wind passes over him and he is gone. It would not be so strange if a tempest, a whirlwind, passing over should sweep him away. The Psalmist means much more than this. The gentlest touch, the whispering breeze, bears him off. He soon becomes a stranger, no more known in the little space he once filled, going out and coming in. *C.*

Worldly men take one view of this, and say that a looking forward and a prophetic tone of mind with respect to death is not natural. And as a counterbalance to and remedy for such presages they take refuge in the matter-of-fact sensation of life which belongs to us. They throw themselves deliberately and systematically upon this world instinct, in order to counterbalance the true prophetic nature of the soul and prevent it from acting, in order to deaden the sense of futurity and annihilate the other world to their minds. Now what is the Scripture way of dealing with the subject of death? It does not allow it to be thus put aside. It makes us view it with steady, calm eye and keep it before us. It tells the soul to reckon beforehand, to see, to prepare ; it lengthens its sight ; it fixes its aim. Foresight was given us that we might be, not paralyzed and rendered motionless, but sobered and chastened in the exercise of our active faculties, that we should feel that very check of which worldly men are impatient, for they would fain while they do live be going to live forever in their imagination. *Mozley.*

One who has looked upon a Western prairie in June can appreciate the allusions of the Bible to the grass and the flower of the field. Yet the brightest gardens of California hardly rival the grassy plains of Syria in the abundance, variety, and brilliancy of flowers. But when there sweeps over the plains of Syria the "east wind" of the Arabian desert, this sirocco scorches as it goes ; it fades the grass, withers the flowers, and turns the fresh field into hay and stubble. So does man fade away in the midst of his pride and luxuries, of his plans and hopes.

17. In contrast with man's weak and perishable frame appears the *mercy* of the Lord—a mercy that has provided comfort for man's

feebleness, solace for his troubles, pardon for his sins ; and for all who will commit themselves in humble, holy fear, everlasting peace and joy. Oh that our souls might rise to more worthy praise of this constant, this tender, this unfailing love ! *J. P. T.*

The mercy of God is eternal ; the eternity of mercy is expressed in the same language as the eternity of God Himself ; and, indeed, since it is His nature, it must be as eternal as He Himself is ; it is from everlasting, as His love is ; which is to be proved by the instances of it, called His tender mercies, which have been ever of old, or from everlasting. And the mercy of God is to everlasting in its fruits and effects ; it is kept with Christ and for Him, the Mediator of the covenant ; into whose hands are put all the promises and blessings of mercy ; called, therefore, "the sure mercies of David." Even temporal blessings which flow from the mercy of God, are new every morning and are daily continued ; and spiritual ones always remain ; the mercy of God never departs from His people notwithstanding their backslidings ; and though He chides them for them and hides His face from them, yet still He has mercy on them. *Gill.*

For the third time God's mercy and loving-kindness is said to be upon "them that fear Him," compare vs. 11, 13, as if to remind us that there is a love within a love, a love which they only know who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who fear Him and walk in His ways, as well as a love which "maketh the sun to shine, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." In the next verse there is the same limitation, "To such as keep His covenant," and to those who not only know, but "do" His will. The blessings of the covenant are no inalienable right ; children's children can only inherit its blessings by cleaving to it. *P.*

Child of God, thou that fearest God, here is mercy nigh thee, mercy enough, everlasting mercy upon thee. This is long-lived mercy. It will live longer than thy sin, longer than temptation, longer than thy sorrows. It is mercy from everlasting to contrive thy salvation, and mercy to everlasting to resist all thy adversaries. And this hath the man that feareth the Lord. Take that other blessed word (v. 11), and thou man that fearest the Lord, hang it like a chain of gold about thy neck : "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy to them that fear Him." If mercy as high and as good as heaven itself will be a privilege, the man that feareth God shall have the privilege. *Bunyan.*

18. Sin sometimes overpowers us for want of remembering. Forgetful hearers are often negligent liverers. A godly man has an effective memory; he "remembers" the commandments of God "to do them." It is to be feared that the sins of God's people are usually sins of forgetfulness and inconsideration. *Manton*.—Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood. They believe so weakly, and love God so little, that they can scarce find whether they believe and love at all; like a man in a swoon, whose pulse and breathing is so weak and obscure that it can hardly be perceived whether they move at all, and, consequently, whether the man be alive or dead. The chief remedy for such would be to follow on their duty, till their graces be increased. Ply your work; wait upon God in the use of His prescribed means, and He will undoubtedly bless you with increase and strength. *Baxter*.

19. The concluding portion of the Psalm extols the greatness and majesty of Him who has thus stooped in pity to His children. The Psalmist had begun by calling upon his own soul to bless Jehovah for His goodness; he had associated with himself, as partakers in that goodness, all who feared the Lord. Now he concludes by calling on the angels and all creation to ascribe blessing, honor, and power to Him who sitteth upon the throne. Lastly, from all that vast congregation of worshippers praising God, he turns to himself, that his voice may not be wanting in the mighty anthem, "Bless thou Jehovah, O my soul." *P*.

19. The Lord hath prepared His throne. The word signifies *established* as well as prepared, and might be so rendered. He hath prepared or established it. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an unmovable dominion; all the strugglings of men and devils cannot overturn it, nor so much as shake it. He cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as Himself, abides forever. And as His counsel, so His authority, shall stand; and "He will do all His pleasure" (Isa. 46: 10). *Charnock*.

20, 21. These few words descriptive of the angels are by no means exhaustive. Yet the points given are of the first importance;—"mighty in strength," *i.e.*, of most exalted powers and capabilities. And evermore obedient to the mandates of the Most High, diligently hearkening to catch every word from His lips and evermore swift to execute it. Upon all these noblest of created beings the

Psalmist calls to bless the Lord Jehovah. *C*.—As in number and order they are huge, mighty, and royal armies, so likewise in perfection of obedience unto that law which the Highest, whom they adore, love, and imitate, hath imposed upon them, such observants they are thereof, that our Saviour, being to set down the perfect idea of that we are to pray and wish for on earth, did not teach to pray or wish for more, than only that here it might be with us, as with them it is in heaven. *Hooker*.—The chief excellence of the angels, the main cause of their strength and power, and of their immense superiority to mankind, is that they *do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word*. For this is the only living source of lasting strength and power. They who do the will of God faithfully and obediently, have God for them; and then what can be against them? Then work itself strengthens them, and is like a tide bearing them onward; because it is *His* work. They, on the other hand, who run counter to the will of God, have God against them; and then what can be for them? *J. C. Have*.

The blessedness of angels doth not consist in the endowments of their nature—that they are great in power, light, knowledge, and wisdom; for notwithstanding these things, many of them became devils. But the excellency and blessedness of the angelical state consists in these two things: First, that they are disposed, and able constantly, inseparably, universally, uninterruptedly, to cleave unto God in love. And as they do so unto God, so they do unto the person of Christ; and through Him, as their Head, unto God, even the Father. Second, add hereunto that gracious reflex sense which they have of the glory, dignity, eternal sweetness, and satisfaction, which arise from hence, and we have the sum of angelical blessedness. *J. Owen*.

I stood at the bedside of a most intelligent Christian, waiting for her great change to come. She was full of joyful anticipation. "Oh," said she, "to 'run with willing feet in the way of God's commandments,' what a glad-some promise is that!" It was a most discriminating perception of this very element of future blessedness—His servants shall serve Him—with no drawing back, no urgency, no idea of necessity—moving and obeying because we must, but with cheerful alacrity, and with all the powers of the ransomed soul flaming in one direction of unmixed, uncoerced and unimpeded choice. The angels who do God's commandments are as flames of fire, alert and resplendent in their promptitude. Our daily prayer at last

will be accomplished ; we shall do the will of God, as it is now done in heaven. The spiritual body shall know no fatigue, and no necessity for recruiting its exhausted strength by sleep. *W. Adams.*

The Bible represents angels as speaking and listening to each other, and God as speaking and listening to them ; while they, in their turn, speak and listen to Him. This is not mere empty imagery. It carries silent proof that fleshless spirits, like God and angels, or our own unbodied souls, have an inward, spiritual sense, in the use of which they communicate and receive knowledge or truth. This knowledge and that inward sense, truth known and made known, are grand media of happy and beneficial intercourse between all pure spirits. *J. S. Stone.*

Those glimpses of the supernal world which we catch from the Scriptures have in them, certainly, quite as much of the character of history as of poetry, and impart the idea, not that there is less of business in heaven than on earth ; but more. Unquestionably the felicity of those beings of a higher order, to whose agency frequent allusions are made by the inspired writers, is not incompatible with the assiduities of a strenuous ministry, to be discharged according to the best ability of each.

But if there be a real and necessary, not merely a shadowy agency in heaven, as well as on earth ; and if human nature is destined to act its part in such an economy, then its constitution, and the severe training it undergoes, are at once explained ; and then also, the removal of individuals in the very prime of their fitness for useful labor ceases to be impenetrably mysterious. The mind of man, formed as it is to be more tenacious of its active habits than even of its moral dispositions, is, in the present state, trained, often at an immense cost of suffering, to the exercise of skill, of forethought, of courage, of patience ; and ought it not to be inferred, unless positive evidence contradicts the supposition, that this system of education bears some relation of fitness to the state for which it is an initiation ? Shall not the very same qualities which here are so sedulously fashioned and finished, be actually needed and used in that future world of perfection ? When once with open eye that "excellent glory" has been contemplated, then shall it be understood that the Divine wisdom is incomparably more honored by the skilful and faithful performances, and by the cheerful toils of agents who have been fashioned and fitted for service, than it could be by the bare exertions of irresistible

power ; and then, when the absolute dependence of creatures is thoroughly felt, may the beautiful orders of the heavenly hierarchy rising and still rising toward perfection, be seen and admired without hazard of forgetting Him who alone is absolutely perfect, and who is the only fountain and first cause of whatever is excellent. *I. T.*

21. "*Bless ye the Lord, all ye His hosts that do His pleasure.*" The sun, moon, stars, and planets do "*His pleasure*" unconsciously ; the "angels" consciously, and with instinctive love, "hearken unto the voice His Word." Both together constitute the Lord's hosts. *Fausset.*

22. The last specification is completely comprehensive ; "*all His works in all places of His wide dominions*"—all that He has made, whether intelligent or not intelligent ; "*in all places*" above, beneath, around ; in heaven, earth, or hell ; let them all fall into this universal chorus of praise and blessing, extolling Jehovah, the One supremely great, supremely good ! Nor will he exempt himself ; for his personal responsibilities as to his own heart are his highest. Therefore he closes as he began, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" *C*

Oh my soul, bless God my Saviour, and magnify His name ; for it is holy, and full of holiest delights. Oh how good, how sweet Thou art, Lord Jesus, to the soul that seeks Thee ! Jesus, Redeemer of the lost, Saviour of the redeemed, hope of exiles, strength of the weary, relief of the anxious spirit, crown of those that triumph, Thyself God most high, let all things in heaven above and in earth beneath bless Thee ! *Bernard.*

The Psalm ends as it began, without a single word of supplication. All is praise, humble, grateful, rapturous praise. Sincere and earnest praise is a higher spiritual exercise than prayer, however intense and believing, for the latter springs from the sense of personal need, while the former looks away from self and seeks only to have the Lord duly honored. As such it meets the strongest instincts of the godly man's soul, and hence is represented as the chief employment of the just made perfect, who rest not day or night, setting forth the glories of Him who was and who is and who is to come. It is not strange, therefore, that saints on earth have always taken a special pleasure in this Psalm, which is such an exuberant burst of grateful praise. *Chambers.*

How personal is this Psalm ! It is personal

in its references to God. It is the personal God of the Hebrews, who sees, hears, and feels. It is He that forgiveth, healeth, redeemeth, crowneth. It is He that executeth righteousness, that pitieth, and remembereth. So the mercies in this Psalm are personal. It is "my soul" that is addressed in the first verse, and then it is declared to the soul that He forgiveth all "thine" iniquities, healeth all "thy" diseases, redeemeth "thy" life from destruction, crowneth "thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." And when we near the end of our pilgrimage, we can say that He knoweth "our" frame, He remembereth that "we" are dust. It is this personality of the Hebrew songs that makes them so valuable. They are songs for our night, lights for our darkness, staves for our weariness, hills of promise for our longing sight. The penitential Psalms are our closets of confession, where we breathe out the story that only God hears. The Psalms of Providence are the windows where we sit and look away upon the green fields of life and still waters of peace to be found near our doors and for our comforting. *E. A. Rand.*

It is in the analysis and study of the soul that the greatness of human life is best realized, and our indebtedness toward its Giver most deeply felt. This reflective reason; this heart, capable of a boundless expansion; this will, which may be trained to a freedom and an intensity of power—of what are these faculties so suggestive as of the knowledge, love, and service due to that Being of beings who is the End as He is the Author of this centre of complex and self-controlling life? *H. P. L.*

What takes place in the government of the

human family when ruled according to the dictates of nature and right, affords an image, imperfect but still true—a shadowing forth, faint yet faithful—of Divine Providence. Thus it is that the Christian religion qualifies and describes the action of God in the life of man. It exhibits God as ever present and accessible to man, as a father to his child; it exhorts, encourages, invites man to implore, to confide in, to pray to God. It reserves absolutely the answer of God to that prayer; He will grant, or He will refuse; we cannot penetrate His motives—"The ways of God are not our ways." Nevertheless, to prayer, ceaseless and ever renewed, the Christian dogma associates the firm hope that "nothing is impossible with God." This dogma is thus in full and intimate harmony with the nature of man; while recognizing his liberty, it does homage to his dignity; in tendering to him the resource of an appeal to God it provides for his weakness. In science, it suppresses not the mystery which cannot be suppressed; but in man's life, it solves the natural problem which weighs upon the soul. *Guizot.*

The idea of religion which appears on the face of every Psalm is the idea of the unfailing tenderness of God, His understanding of every honest prayer, the certainty that in the vastness and the catastrophes of the world the soul in its own singleness has a refuge, is linked at the throne of the world to its own reward and strength, is held by the hand, is guided by the eye of One who cares for the weakest as much as He is greater than the greatest of His creatures. And there is no mood of mixed and varied feeling, no form of deep and yearning affection, no tone of absorbing emotion, in which this sense of what God is to the soul does not express itself in the Psalms. *R. W. Church.*

PSALM CIV.

- 1 BLESS the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, thou art very great ;
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
- 2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment ;
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain :
- 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters ;
Who maketh the clouds his chariot ;
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind :
- 4 Who maketh winds his messengers ;
His ministers a flaming fire :
- 5 Who laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be moved for ever.
- 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a vesture ;
The waters stood above the mountains.
- 7 At thy rebuke they fled ;
At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away ;
- 8 They went up by the mountains, they went down by the valleys [or, *The mountains rose, the valleys sank down*],
Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them.
- 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over ;
That they turn not again to cover the earth.
- 10 He sendeth forth springs into the valleys ;
They run among the mountains :
- 11 They give drink to every beast of the field ;
The wild asses quench their thirst.
- 12 By them the fowl of the heaven have their habitation,
They sing among the branches.
- 13 He watereth the mountains from his chambers :
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
- 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
And herb for the service of man ;
That he may bring forth food out of the earth :
- 15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,
And oil to make his face to shine,
And bread that strengtheneth man's heart.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are satisfied ;
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted ;
- 17 Where the birds make their nests :
As for the stork, the fir trees are her house.
- 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats ;
The rocks are a refuge for the conies.
- 19 He appointed the moon for seasons :
The sun knoweth his going down.
- 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night ;
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
- 21 The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God.
- 22 The sun ariseth, they get them away,
And lay them down in their dens.
- 23 Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening.
- 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works !
In wisdom hast thou made them all :
The earth is full of thy riches.
- 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
Wherein are things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts.
- 26 There go the ships ;
There is leviathan, whom thou hast formed
to take his pastime therein.
- 27 These wait all upon thee,
That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.
- 28 That thou givest unto them they gather ;
Thou openest thine hand, they are satisfied
with good.
- 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled ;
Thou takest away their breath, they die,
And return to their dust.
- 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created ;
And thou renewest the face of the ground.
- 31 Let the glory of the LORD endure for ever ;
Let the LORD rejoice in his works :
- 32 Who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth ;
He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.
- 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live :
I will sing praise to my God while I have
any being.
- 34 Let my meditation be sweet unto him :
I will rejoice in the LORD.
- 35 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth.
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
PRAISE YE THE LORD !

The Hymn of Creation.

PSALM 103 began with "Bless Jehovah, O my soul;" so also does this anonymous Psalm, in which God's rule in the kingdom of nature is the subject of praise, just as His rule in the kingdom of grace was the theme of the former; here also mention is made of the angels in connection with God's government. The poet sings the divinely appointed, continuous existence of the world, having present to his mind the creative beginnings related in Gen. 1 and 2, and closes with the wish that evil may be banished from this good creation, which so thoroughly and so fully reveals the might and wisdom and goodness of God. It is a nature Psalm; but such an one as was possible to no heathen poet. To the Israelitish poet all things in nature appear as brought forth and sustained by the creative might of the One God, as brought into being and preserved in existence, that He may communicate Himself in free, condescending love. D.

This Psalm stands without caption. In subject it bears close relations to Psalm 103, a circumstance strongly in favor of referring it to the same author. It enlarges the glorious theme of *praise to God* by setting forth His wonderful works in the material world. It is *God in nature*, yet not at all in the pantheistic sense—*nature itself a part of God*; but in the far nobler sense, a personal God, the Infinite Creator of all material things, forevermore energizing by His present hand to sustain the forces which supply from the material world the wants of all the living. Remarkably the course of thought follows somewhat definitely the order of topics presented in the original account of the creation given by Moses: God the glorious Creator; investing Himself with light; stretching out the broad expanse of the visible heavens; locating the waters that belong above the firmament; the clouds also and the winds; fixing the solid earth and gathering together the waters appropriated to its surface and thus providing for the springs and rivers that supply animal want and insure the fruits of the earth. Thus the author's mind ranges on, as of one whose open eye has traced out the marvellous ways of God in blessing all His vast family of living creatures—themes on which it is sweet to dwell, and which call forth from his grateful, adoring soul praises ever fresh to the great Father of all. C.

This Divine ode is a bright and living picture of God's creative power, pouring life and gladness throughout the universe. The distinct recognition of the absolute dependence of the

universe, as created, upon the Creator, forms the very basis and main thread of the poem. The great work of creation is here regarded not as a thing of the past merely. He who made, renews the face of the earth. It is the same profound view of the relation of the Cosmos to the Creator which Paul exhibits in his speech on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:25). In its main outline the poem follows the story of creation contained in the first chapter of Genesis. And yet the Psalm is not a mere copy of the original. Breathing the same lofty spirit, it has a force and an originality of its own. In some respects the Psalm, even more strikingly than the early record, exhibits the infinite greatness, the order, the life of the universe. The creation of Genesis is a creation of the past; the creation of the Psalm is a creation of the present. The one portrays the beginning of the eternal order, the other its perpetual, living spectacle. Hence, too, the ode has far more animation than the record. How vivid are the images which it calls up—the wild ass roaming the sands of the wilderness, stooping to slake his thirst at the stream which God has provided; the birds building their nests, and breaking forth into song in the trees which fringe the margin of the torrent-beds; the wild goats bounding from rock to rock, and finding their home in the inaccessible crags; the young lions filling the forest by night with their roar, and "seeking from God their prey;" and the sea with the same plenitude of life, its depths peopled with huge monsters and swarming myriads of lesser fish, and its surface studded with sails, the image of the enterprise, the traffic, the commerce of the world; and lastly, in fine contrast with this merely animal activity of creatures led by their appetites, the even tenor, the calm, unobtrusive dignity of man's daily life of labor; take all these together, and we have a picture which for truth and depth of coloring, for animation, tenderness, beauty, has never been surpassed. It is not surprising that this great hymn of creation should have called forth the warmest expressions of admiration from those who have studied it. Sanchez says, "The Psalm is delightful, sweet, and instructive, as teaching us the soundest views of nature, and the best method of pursuing the study of it—viz., by admiring with one eye the works of God, and with the other God Himself, their Creator and Preserver." The great naturalist, A. Von Humboldt, writes: "It might almost be said that one single Psalm represents the image of the whole Cosmos. We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such limited com-

pass the whole universe—the heavens and earth—sketched with a few bold touches. The contrast of the labor of man with the animal life of nature, and the image of omnipresent, invisible power, renewing the earth at will, or sweeping it of inhabitants, is a grand and solemn poetical creation.” “With what an eye of gladness,” says Herder, “does the poet survey the earth! It is a green mountain of Jehovah, which He lifted above the waters; a paradise which He established for the dwelling-place of so many living creatures above the seas. The series of pictures which the poet here displays is, in fact, the natural history of the earth.”

The Psalm is without any strophical division. The poet begins with the light, and the heaven with its cloud and storms (vs. 2-4), corresponding to the works of the first and second days. Then he passes to the earth, first describing its original chaotic state, and the separation of earth and water by the voice of God (vs. 5-9), in accordance with Gen. 1 : 9, 10 (first portion of the third day's work); and then the varied adornment of the earth as the dwelling-place of living creatures. The mention of the heavenly bodies follows (vs. 19-23, fourth day's work). Then, after a short exclamation of admiring gratitude (v. 24), the poet, who has already woven into his verse so happily some portion of the creative wonders of the fifth and sixth days, the birds and beasts and creeping things and man, turns back again (vs. 25, 26) to speak of the sea and its life (Gen. 1 : 21). Finally, after expressing, in vivid phrase, the absolute dependence of all this vast and manifold creation upon its Maker (vs. 27-30), he longs to see the bright original restored, to find himself and all God's creatures parts of the mighty harmony, that a new sabbath of creation may dawn, a rest of God, in which He shall rejoice in His works and they in Him, and the world become a temple filled with His praise. P.

1. Bless the Lord, O my soul. A good man's work lieth most within doors, he is more taken up with his own soul than with all the world besides; neither can he ever be alone so long as he hath God and his own heart to converse with. *Trapp*.—A lively sense of God's greatness gives the soul a clear sight of her nothingness; a lively sense of God's holiness, a clear sense of her sinfulness; a lively sense of His goodness, a clear sense of her unworthiness. *Horneck*.

O Lord my God, Thou art very great. Greatness, if you look at it as something separate from you and away, still more if you have a consciousness that it may be

against you, is a matter of awe and terror. If you mingle it with yourself, as a part of yourself and yourself a part of it, greatness, becoming a possession, is a grand thought and a pleasant one. So we unite these two clauses. David could not have said the second with gladness unless he could have said the first with confidence: “O Lord *my* God, Thou art very great.” If it is great to be at the same time infinitely comprehensive and exquisitely minute, to fill the widest and yet to be occupied by the narrowest, then what a God is ours! The unspeakably large and the invisibly small are alike to Him. We stand and marvel at the combination of the telescopic glance and the microscopic care; and we confess, “O Lord my God, Thou art very great.” Some one has said that continuity is the secret of the sublime; the eye goes on and on, and finds no break, and calls it sublimity. Then what a sublimity there is in Him who century after century, year by year, without the shadow of a turning, has continued the same, “yesterday, to-day, and forever!” Look, too, at the wonderful greatness of His plan of redemption. The length, and the breadth, and the depth, and the height are all passing knowledge; and we have nothing to do but to humble ourselves in the dust and say, “O Lord my God, Thou art very great.” *J. Vaughan*.

2. Coverest Thyself with light as a garment. God weaves His attributes, the tokens of His presence, into all the works of His hands. He spreads His vesture abroad in creation, and brings it close to our touch, instinct with His being, that we may feel and grasp the God in whom we live and move, and know Him to be, not a mere abstraction, but a God near and ever-present. *Ker*.

Light is the most powerful principle in creation; it is the cause of all the order and beauty and life of the universe. It is the most universal of all forces; it paints the flower and the rainbow; it glimmers in the remotest star in space, and it fades away in the dim hue of the smallest organism in the deepest abyss of the ocean. Beyond its influence, everlasting death and silence reign. It is the most necessary of all the forces of the universe. Other forces are needed for a time; light is always needed. Other forces are preparatory or revolutionary; light is the abiding crown and perfection of all things. Other forces make room for themselves by displacement; light dwells with everything except darkness. It interferes with nothing, it requires no room, it clears no space for itself to occupy, but pervades all nature, and shines upon the humblest moss and the greatest moun-

tain. It is the calmest and stillest force in the universe ; its mighty pulse-beat is never heard. Though it comes with inconceivable velocity from an inconceivable distance, it stirs not the spider's web on which it glistens, nor pains the sensitive eye which it enables to see. Its nature becomes organized in the things which grow out of the earth, and in the creatures which live upon it ; and although it is continually imparting itself, it suffers no loss of substance or diminution of brightness. Need we wonder, then, that, possessing all these remarkable qualities, our Lord should have chosen this principle to be the highest and holiest symbol of Himself. He is the True Light, light in its highest form and fullest significance ; the ideal of which sunlight is only an imperfect and partial realization ; the substance of which all physical light is only the shadow. The whole universe is the shekinah cloud which He illuminates. *H. Macmillan.*

God "*dwells in light ;*" He is "*clothed with it as a garment ;*" it invests Him with a calm and steady effulgence. One element, at least, of this "*excellent glory*" is the infinite range, the fulness and perfection of His knowledge ; it is this which constitutes Him the sun and centre of the intellectual system, the fountain of intelligence and "*the Father of Lights.*" All minds, in all worlds, with all their faculties, their diversified gifts, their powers of perception, thought, reason, utterance — all these everywhere are but beams and rays which have issued from and are sustained by that luminous orb, that central sun, the God that dwells in the cloudless effulgence of uncreated light, and who is at once the light and the life of angels and men. All knowledge, all science ; every conception of the ideal, the beautiful, the perfect ; whatever any creature can acquire from without, whatever may appear to originate within ; piercing intuition, profound thought, artistic achievement, mechanical invention, eloquence, song—all are but faint and imperfect reflections of what first exists in the Divine mind. There, too, it exists in such infinite and inconceivable opulence, in combination with so much of what is unimagined and unknown, that, if we could enumerate the entire sum of things which constitute the mental wealth of the universe, we should not only have to say, — "These all come forth from the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel," but we should have to add to this the still deeper thought, "and many like things are with Him." *T. Binney.*

With light. The first creation of God in the works of the days was the light of sense ; the

last was the light of reason ; and His Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of the spirit. *Bacon.*

Stretchest out the heavens. This describes briefly the work of the second day. The heavens are the firmament, the expanse (as the Hebrew word literally means) which is spread out to separate the waters. And in the waters above God lays, as it were, the floor of His palace. *P.*

Like a curtain. Because the Hebrews conceived of heaven as a temple and palace of God, that sacred azure was at once the floor of His, the roof of our abode. Yet the dwellers in tents ever loved best the figure of the heavenly tent. They represent God as daily spreading it out, and fastening it at the extremity of the horizon to the pillars of heaven, the mountains ; it is to them a tent of safety, of rest, of a fatherly hospitality in which God lives with His creatures. *Herder.*

Nature has two great revelations—that of use and that of beauty ; and the first thing we observe about these two characteristics of hers is that they are bound together and tied to each other. The beauty of nature is not, as it were, a fortunate accident, which can be separated from her use ; there is no difference in the tenure upon which these two characteristics stand ; the beauty is just as much a part of nature as the use ; they are only different aspects of the self-same facts. But though the outward face of nature is a religious communication to those who come to it with the religious element already in them, no man can get a religion out of the beauty of nature. There must be for the base of a religion the internal view, the inner sense, the look into ourselves, and recognition of an inward state—sin, helplessness, misery. If there is not this, outward nature cannot of itself enlighten man's conscience and give him a knowledge of God. It will be a picture to him, and nothing more. *Mozley.*

4. Those events which we ascribe to chance, as the weather, or to nature, as the seasons, are duties done to that God who maketh His angels to be winds, and His ministers a flame of fire. Nature is not inanimate ; its daily toil is intelligent ; its works are *duties*. Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven. *Newman.*

Who maketh His angels spirits. The words, "*creating His angels spirits,*" may either mean "creating them spiritual beings, not material beings," or "*creating them winds ;*" *i.e.*, like

the winds, invisible, rapid in their movements, and capable of producing great effects. The last mode of interpretation seems pointed out by the parallelism, "*and His ministers,*" or, "servants," who are plainly the same as His angels, "*a flame of fire,*" *i.e.* like the lightning. The statement here made about the angels seems to be this, "They are created beings, who in their qualities bear a resemblance to the winds and the lightning." The argument deduced in Heb. 2:7 from this statement for the inferiority of the angels is direct and powerful. He is the Son; they are the creatures of God. "*Only-begotten*" is the description of His mode of existence; *made* is the description of theirs. All their powers are communicated power; and however high they may stand in the scale of creation, it is in that scale they stand, which places them infinitely below Him who is so the Son of God as to be "God over all, blessed forever." *John Brown.*

5. The work of the third day in its two great divisions: First, the separation of the land and water (vs. 5-9); next, the clothing of the earth with grass, herbs, and trees (vs. 10-18). The poet, however, ranges beyond the first creation, and peoples the earth with the living creatures of the fifth day. It is not a picture of still life, like that in Genesis, but a living, moving, animated scene.

6. The original chaos is described, not according to the heathen notion, as a confused mass, earth and water mingled together, but the earth as already formed, yet completely enveloped in the water (2 Pet. 2:5). This vast, swelling, tumultuous sea hears the "rebuke" of God, and sinks to its appointed place; the earth appears, emerges from her watery covering, and shows her surface diversified with mountain and valley. P.

5, 6. There seems to be a recognition of the idea that the earth is established upon a nether deep in v. 3: "Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters." But the inspired writer was not permitted in his statement of the facts to commit an error. He proceeds to say that God "laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be moved forever" (for all the days), and then afterward "covered it with the deep as with a vesture." Here, then, the cosmical history is given as geological science has since projected it, and also the stability of the earth is limited to time, to all the days. And it is not till the fiat has gone forth that time shall be no longer, that the stability of the earth shall cease. The Psalm is magnificent poetry, but the solid facts rise up through it as the granite

peaks emerge above the encircling and sun-painted clouds. *Interior.*

9. *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.* That bound has once been passed, but it shall never be so again. The deluge was caused by the suspension of the Divine mandate which held the floods in check; they knew their old supremacy, and hastened to reassert it, but now the covenant promise forever prevents a return of that carnival of waters. Destruction lies asleep in the bed of the ocean, and though our sins might well arouse it, yet are its hands made strong by covenant mercy, so that it cannot break loose again upon the guilty sons of men. S.—Wisdom giveth us the like eulogium of the power of God in Prov. 8:29, "He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment." *Caryl.*

10-15. The loving care, the tender sympathy with which God, clothing the earth with beauty, provides at the same time for the wants of all His creatures. Even the wild ass, which shuns the approach of man, and the birds of heaven, which have no keeper, are not left unprovided for. P.

10. **He sendeth springs into the valleys; they run among the mountains.** The incessant murmur of the mountain spring in the solitude speaks to the ear of the thoughtful of the wonderful rhythm of the universe. That spring seems the wayward child of uncertain parents; and yet it wells up with every beat of the pulse of nature, as it has welled up for thousands of years. As the blood circulates in the body continually, so does the water circulate on the earth. Not more certainly would life terminate in the body if the pulse ceased to beat than would the world be locked in everlasting sleep if the mountain spring ceased to throb. Calm and grand as when the morning stars sang together in the morning of creation, Nature moves in her appointed orbit; and her blades of grass, and grains of sand, and drops of water tell us that we must be brought into concord with the beneficent law which they all obey so steadfastly and harmoniously or else perish. What nature does unconsciously and will-lessly let us do consciously and willingly; and learning a lesson even from the humble voice of the mountain spring, let us make the statutes of the Lord our song in the house of our pilgrimage. . . . Very mysterious seems the origin of a spring as it sparkles up from the bosom of the mountain, from the heart of the rock, into the sunshine. It stimulates our imagination. It seems like a

new creation in the place. Through what dark fissures, through what fine veins and pores of the earth, have its waters trickled up to the central reservoir whose overflowing comes up to view, crystal-clear and crowned with light! The Hebrew name of a prophet was derived from the bubbling forth of the waters of a spring, implying that his utterances were the irresistible overflowings of the Divine fountain of inspiration in his soul. Beside the well of Sychar, incarnate in human form, in visible manifestation to the eyes of men, was the great Reality to whom all myths and symbols pointed, who thirsted Himself that He might give us to drink. And if our eyes be purged with spiritual eye-salve, we, too, shall see beside every spring the true Oracle, the great Prophet, the Divinity of the waters, who "sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills." As the natural spring stands between the living and the dead, between the sterility of desert plains and the bright verdure which it creates along its course, so He stands between our souls and spiritual death, between the desolation of sin and the peaceable fruits of righteousness which He enables us to produce.

H. Macmillan.

Of all inorganic substances acting in their own proper nature, and without assistance or combination, water is the most wonderful. If we think of it as the source of all the changefulness and beauty which we have seen in clouds; then as the instrument by which the earth was modelled into symmetry, and its crags chiselled into grace; then as, in the form of snow, it robes the mountains it has made with that transcendent light which we could not have conceived if we had not seen; then as it exists in the form of the torrent, in the iris which spans it, in the morning mist which rises from it, the deep crystalline pools which mirror its hanging shore, in the broad lake and glancing river; finally, in that which is to all human minds the best emblem of unwearied, unconquerable power, the wild, various, fantastic, tameless unity of the sea; what shall we compare to this mighty, this universal element, for glory and for beauty? or how shall we follow its eternal changefulness of feeling? It is like trying to paint a soul.

Ruskin.

12. *Above them the birds of heaven dwell, from between the branches they give voice.* The poetical character of the composition is in nothing more obvious than in these minute strokes of exquisite painting, superadded to the more essential parts of the description. At the same time, these are not to be regarded as mere lavish or

gratuitous embellishments, since the Psalmist's purpose is to celebrate God's wonderful and bountiful provision for His living creatures, and the running brooks would fail to answer one of their most valuable ends if there were no birds to *give voice* or sing among the branches of the overhanging trees. The word translated *birds* is a collective answering to the old English *fowl*, not as used in the version of this Psalm, where it is plural, but in that of Gen. 1 : 20, 22, 26, 28. That passage furnishes an explanation of the phrase *fowl* (or *birds*) of heaven, in the fuller description (Gen. 1 : 20), *fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven; i.e., through the air, across the face of the expanse or visible heaven.* A.

The fowls of the heaven which sing among the branches. How do the blackbird and thrush (thrush), with their melodious voices, bid welcome to the cheerful spring, and in their fixed months warble forth such ditties as no art or instrument can reach to! But the nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet, loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that it makes mankind to think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very laborer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, "Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth!" Izaak Walton.

13. *Watering mountains from His upper rooms; from the fruit of Thy works is the earth filled.* He still returns to God as the Author of these merciful provisions, and represents Him, by a beautiful figure, as pouring this abundant supply of water from His *upper rooms*, the same word that was rendered *chambers* in v. 3. *The fruit of Thy works*, the result or product of Thy creative energy. *Filled*, not in the sense of being occupied, which would require a different Hebrew verb, but in that of being abundantly supplied or saturated. The sudden apostrophe to God Himself enhances the poetical effect. A.

14, 15. Thus doubly watered, from above and from beneath, the earth brings forth grass for the cattle, and its various fruits, corn and wine and oil, for the use of men; for the cattle what they need, for man more than he needs, that which makes his heart glad and his countenance bright. P.

Arguments against abstinence have been sought in the Bible. Its advocates have simply stood upon the defensive. Whether among the

Jews, and in our Saviour's day, there was a wine that contained no alcohol is hard to be determined, although in regard to the significance of the Hebrew *yayin* and the Greek *oinos* there can be but little doubt. *Ab effervescendo*, says Gesenius; but he puts to it *fortasse*, "perhaps;" and, in truth, he has no authority for it whatever in any of the Shemitic tongues. These words simply meant the liquid that came from pressing the grape. There is no evidence of any further idea associated with it. It was not *fermenting fluid*, but *grape juice*. This, it was well known, grew stronger with age. It was at first pleasant and nourishing, then exhilarating, and at last intoxicating. In the Bible the first use is commended, the second mentioned without disapprobation or approval, the third in all cases condemned.

Our view of the primary design of a passage in Scripture must control all else. Believing in the full and perfect inspiration of the Bible, I must still in every case inquire what is the thought, precept, emotion, primarily inspired, and what is subordinate to it; what is the leading idea, and what is simply illustration drawn from the writer's own best knowledge, or opinions having their value not in their absolute correctness, as scientific fact, but only as they serve this subordinate purpose. The Scriptures are full of examples. The passages that may be regarded as having a clear bearing on these temperance questions may be arranged in three classes. They are, first, bare historical recitals, without a word to indicate approval or disapproval; secondly, references to wine, etc., used in illustration of other ideas to which they are wholly subordinate; thirdly, the directly ethical, wherein the use and effects of wine form the real subject-matter of the instruction given.

The first class requires no discussion. The nature of the second is best shown by an example. Take this one most often quoted: "Who maketh the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the use of man; to bring forth food from the earth, and wine that maketh glad man's heart, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart." Gratitude to God for giving unto men abundantly what they suppose to be good for them—this is the subject-matter of the inspiration; all else is subordinate and illustrative, as drawn from things deemed good by the writer, or by those whom he primarily addresses. Praise and thanksgiving, this is the Divine idea, the inbreathed emotion. The soul, full of it, seeks illustrative language for its expression. The

vine, the olive, the barley, were the agricultural staples of Palestine. Men are called to praise God for their abundance. There is no more approval of any one use than there is of another. A possible noxious substance made from either is no more covered by a Divine benediction in the one case than in the other. A possible intoxicating wine from the grape is no more blessed than a possible whiskey from the barley. We exegetically infer that if the inspired writer is a good man, he has not in his mind wine as intoxicating, or as a means of intoxicating, or as anything that may tend to it. "Rejoicing the heart," or "making glad," does not express that idea. The other substances, too, "rejoice the heart;" that is, inspire gratitude. This may be called moral inference, but it is none the less legitimate exegesis. This one hundred and fourth Psalm showed a most sublime inspiration. It is full of God and His glory, but it gives the writer no new chemical knowledge, and therefore his language cannot be pressed into the service of either the deniers or the affirmers of alcohol. Intoxication was a moral state. To understand that required no science. It was a bad thing, and a good man, inspired or uninspired, must condemn it, whether in its incipient or its advanced stages. To talk of excess in it is absurd. It is a spiritual disorder, and hence the least degree of it is excess. He must, therefore, have had in view something non intoxicating, though ignorant of its criminal cause, and consequently liable to be mistaken, though his mistake as to illustrative fact could not compromise the spiritual idea.

Hence we infer that the wine in this passage could not have been such as is now sold in the saloons of New York and Chicago, or the kind of wine in whose defence this scriptural anti-temperance argument is generally resorted to, and for which purpose alone it has any marketable value. But there certainly were wines, or mixtures, drunk in Judea which did intoxicate. The reasoning, therefore, which insists on some acknowledged distinction, is perfectly sound as moral deduction, which must enter, more or less, into interpretation. On this account it is not to be sneered at as deficient in its philology, which really has less to do with the discussion than is commonly imagined. Instead of being dependent on lexical definitions of *yayin* and *tirosh*, the evidence is mainly historical and inferential; and here the temperance advocate is as likely to be right as his oftentimes too contemptuous opponent. He is no more likely to be wrong than the modern traveller in Eastern countries, or than the missionary who is so ab-

surdly appealed to as determining the old wines by the demoralized tastes of the modern Bedouin. Be all this as it may in regard to the chemistry of the question or the possibility of there ever having been any wines that were absolutely unalcoholic, we are safe in adhering to the distinction between the inspired idea and its illustrative language. Men who quote a passage like Psalm 104 : 14 as either an approval or disapproval of wine-drinking *per se*, or who would regard the writer's language as equally infallible in respect to the supposed physical fact and the spiritual lesson, ought to consider where such a principle of interpretation would lead them if carried out. Psalm 121 : 4 teaches the sleepless providence of God, the safety of those who commit themselves to its protection. This is the inspired idea. It is in itself full and perfect. It might have been presented in general terms. The writer, however, under the suggestive power of the Divine emotion, though not scientifically taught by it, is impelled to the use of vivid examples. He has a rich imagination. On this account, it may be, God chose him for His inspired human medium. His figures are exceedingly rich and beautiful: "Behold, He slumbereth not who keepeth Israel. Jehovah is thy watcher; Jehovah is thy covering shadow, on the right hand and on the left. By day the sun shall not smite thee, *nor the moon by night.*" Inspiration does not disdain to borrow from inspiration (Rev. 7 : 16): "Never more shall the sun fall upon them, nor any heat." The second illustration of Psalm 121 is taken from the supposed evil influence of the moon. Now whether this be true or not as scientific fact, does not at all affect its force and vividness, or its fitness as a representative of the Divine idea. The moonbeams streaming by night into the chamber of the sleepless invalid, how vividly might it recall to him the spiritual solace of this assuring language! To the pure spiritual believer, the sense of protection which it gives would not be in the least impaired by any opinion he might entertain, or might suppose the old Hebrew writer to have entertained, respecting the scientific fact, real or imaginary. On the other hand, he who should treat this as inspired proof that the moon does actually exert a malarious physical influence, or should thus use the Bible to settle a physical question, would be acting precisely like the fanatical anti-temperance man who should cite Psalm 104 : 14 as a Divine testimony to wine-drinking, or a sure proof that alcoholic stimulus must be in itself a good and healthful thing. The cases are alike, whether the religionist uses one or both

as a sure attestation to a fact in natural philosophy, or the infidel seizes hold of either as a ground of cavil against the intrinsic truthfulness of the Scriptures. *Taylor Lévis.* [For the "third class," see Prov. 23 : 29-35. B.]

15. Bread which strengtheneth man's heart. In hunger not only the *strength* is prostrated, but the *natural courage* is also abated. *Hunger* has no enterprise, emulation, nor courage. But when, in such circumstances, a little bread is received into the stomach, the *strength* is restored, and the *spirits* revived. *A. Clarke.*

16. The trees of Jehovah, so called as planted, not by human hand, but by God Himself, trees of the forest and the mountain, in opposition to those which come under human cultivation, such as the vine and the olive, which are implied in v. 15. P.

Full are the trees of Jehovah; the cedars of Lebanon which He planted. Full; *i.e.*, abundantly supplied, saturated as in v. 13. What is first said of trees, or of the noblest trees, in general, is then said of the cedars in particular. The *trees of Jehovah*, like the *cedars of God* in Psalm 80 : 10, are those which, by their loftiness, fruitfulness, or beauty, bear the strongest impress of their Maker's hand. The *cedars of Lebanon* are often mentioned as the noblest and most famous of their kind. A.—The cedars are "trees of the Lord" on account of the *peculiarities of their structure*. In common with all the pine tribe, they are exceptional in their organization. They reveal a new idea of the creative mind. The cedars are "the trees of the Lord" on account of the *antiquity of their type*. It was of this class of trees that the pre-Adamite forests were principally composed. The cedars are the "trees of the Lord" on account of the *majesty of their appearance*. It is the tree, *par excellence*, of the Bible, the type of all forest vegetation. *Hugh Macmillan.*

17. Where the (small) birds nestle; (as to) the stork, the cypresses (are) her house. He again recurs to the provision made for birds, which is here connected with the trees, as it is in v. 12. The word translated *birds* is not the one there used, but the same with that in Psalm 84 : 3 ; 102 : 7, where it is commonly translated *sparrow*, though supposed to be a general term for small birds, so called from their chirping; twittering noise. Here it may represent the smaller and the stork the larger class of birds. The Hebrew name of the stork means *merciful*, and is supposed to have reference to the natural kindness of that bird, both to its parents and its young. *Nestle, or build their nests.* A.

How one thing fits into another in this fair

creation, each link drawing on its fellow ; the rains water the fir-trees, and the fir-trees become the happy home of birds. Observe, also, how everything has its use—the boughs furnish a home for the birds ; and every living thing has its accommodation—the stork finds a house in the pines. Her nest is called a house, because this bird exhibits domestic virtues and maternal love which make her young to be comparable to a family. S.

18. *The high mountains and precipices* or “cliffs” are mentioned because they, like the trees, are a *shelter* for the wild animals. God provides food and God provides shelter for His creatures. P.—The names of the animals here mentioned are not of the slightest exegetical importance, since the only peculiarities involved are those suggested by the text itself—to wit, that the animals intended must be such as inhabit rocks and mountains. A.

19. Transition to the work of the fourth day ; but still so contrived as to introduce another picture of life upon the earth, and the contrast between the life of the night and the life of the day. **The moon**, mentioned first, because to the Hebrew mind the night naturally preceded the day, as throughout Gen. 1, “And there was evening and there was morning.” Hence we have first the night-scene (vs. 20, 21) and then the day-scene (vs. 22, 23). P.

He made the moon for seasons ; the sun knows his setting. Even the heavenly bodies have a reference to man's advantage. The moon is a measure of time, and the sun defines the period of active labor. The word translated *seasons* is here put for all divisions of time, including the succession of day and night, to which there is perhaps a special reference, as in the other clause, where the meaning seems to be that the sun knows when and where to set, and does not make the day with its attendant toils perpetual. This is a strong poetical description of an obvious and familiar fact, and no more presupposes a particular theory or system of astronomy than the similar language of uninspired poets among ourselves. A.—**Knoweth his going down.** This mention of the sunset prepares the way for the night-picture which follows.

20-23. Even the night has its busy life ; the beasts of prey are abroad, and they, too, wait upon the providence of God. The whole picture is finely conceived, and the contrast is perfect between the restless movement and roaring of the wild beasts, and man's calm life of labor, continued in the quiet light of day from morning till evening. All the other creatures wait upon God, in simple dependence upon Him ;

man must *labor*, as well as gather what God gives him, if he would be satisfied with good. P.—“Beasts of the forest creep forth,” not stealthily, but as those who are in their place and on their own time. God made them for night work. “Seek their food from God,” in the way of seeking by instinct what His careful bounty has provided. The Psalmist purposely honors God as the Great Provider for even the powerful lion. C.

23. *Forth goes man to his work, and to his labor until evening.* This verse presents the day-scene corresponding to the night-scene of the two preceding verses. When night comes on, the beasts of the forest are in motion ; when the sun appears, they gather to their lairs, and man comes forth to labor *until evening*, when the scene is shifted as before. Leaving out of view all higher claims to admiration and respect, the poetical merit of this whole description is of the highest order. A.

Man alone, among all creatures, in distinction from the involuntary instruments of the Almighty, has a real daily work. He has a definite part to play in life, and can recognize it. *Moll.*—God appoints to every one his work, and prepares every one for that work by special training in His providence, and by special gifts through His Spirit. Let every one, then, accept his actual life work as from God, let every one recognize, use, and profit by his daily providential training, actively and wisely employ his gifts, and steadfastly seek the guiding, helping grace of the Divine Spirit. B.

Toil is a pleasure. There is no steady-going, every-day reliable pleasure that is superior to that of laying by in store for the future, and seeing in hand and secure the products of that toil. It is the mainstay of hope and of pleasant anticipation. It is a very simple and homely matter, but it would be hard to find anything pleasanter than the sight of a load of hay or grain going into the barn. Any storing away for future use is the same—storing away knowledge and education in the mind, money in the savings bank, apples and roots in the cellar, or laying up treasures in heaven, where moth or rust doth not corrupt, nor thieves break through nor steal. *Interior.*

It is a principle sufficiently evident in the infirmity of man that he cannot give himself incessantly to labor, whether bodily or mental, but must have seasons of repose. We shrink from the thought and mention of suicide, but there are other modes of self-destruction than that of laying hands on one's own person. There is the suicide of intemperance ; there is

also the suicide of over-labor. It is as much our duty to relax when we feel our strength overpassed, as to persevere while that strength is sufficient. God has, with tender consideration, provided intervals of repose, and so made it a man's own fault if he sink beneath excessive labor. What a beautiful ordinance is that of day and night ! What a gracious appointment is that of Sunday ! When the Sabbath is spent in the duties that belong to it, its influence gives fresh edge to the blunted human powers. At last we must all wear away, but our comfort is that, though the outer man perish, the inner man shall be renewed day by day. *Melville.*

Man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning, for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by, and which we must stick to till evening ; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which *no man can work.* H.

Every Christian, whatever he is doing, should be laboring for that which endures to everlasting life. His toil should not have self for its end, but God and Christ, and, in them, the good of suffering, sinful humanity. When others, with every fresh gain, put only the question, What more can I do for myself ? he is to ask, What more can I do for Christ and His cause ? What more for man ? The Christian will not have less security for his own maintenance, but all the more. He will have his daily bread by his Lord's prayer, but then he works for it, not as an absolute owner of himself or of his labor, but as a steward ; and all his business, in the dullest cities where he toils, has spires pointing Godward and heavenward. Men may call this ideal and impracticable, but it has been largely realized by some—it is, in a degree, by many—and it is the only thing that can redeem human business from being dreary, degrading toil, and man himself from feeling that he is a mere beast of burden. It will carry comfort and dignity into every day of our life, and every hour of the day, if we bear this precept with us : "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." *Ker.*

To live in a perpetual day and have what we call the hours of business ceaseless, even as the flow of rivers, would leave us no room for reflection. Our soul would be blind to itself by reason of the perpetual seeing of our eyes. God therefore draws a curtain over His light, checks the busy hours of work and the turmoil of trade, and recalls us to moods of silence and meditative thoughtfulness in the depths of our own spirit. Another day is gone, its works are ended. Am-

bition has spent the fever of another day. Pleasure has exhausted her charms. Idleness itself is weary. And now, as the world grows still and excitement dies away, the mind calls off its activity and turns it inward on itself. It hears no call of God, perhaps, and thinks of doing nothing as a duty. But a pause has come, and something it must think of, for it cannot stand still. Detained by nothing now on hand, it travels far, and makes a large review. It takes in, as it were, by snatches, other worlds. It touches the springs of its own immortal wants, and they answer quick and heavily. Whatever wrong has been committed stalks into the mind with an appalling tread. If God is a subject unwelcome, and guilt another even more unwelcome, the moral nature has so great advantage now, and, withal, so great sensibility that the door of the soul is held open to things not welcome. All those highest and most piercing truths that most deeply concern the great problem of life will often come nigh to thoughtful men in the dusk of their evenings and their hours of retirement to rest. The night is the judgment-bar of the day. *Bushnell.*

Until the evening. Not in the daytime only, lest we begin to run well, but fall away before our course is ended. The *end* is the proof of the matter. When the sun shines, this earth pleases ; but let us look toward that eventide and the cool of the day, when the Lord of the vineyard will walk amid the trees of the garden, and say unto His steward, "Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." That evening will be the trial, when the heat, and fever, and noise of the noontide are over, and the light fades, and the prospect saddens, and the shades lengthen, and the busy world is still. May that day and that hour ever be in our thoughts. *Newman.*—There is nothing more impressive than to stand amid a great city at dead of night, when labor rests, "And all that mighty heart is lying still !" Thus is it when life's day is over. Of what pertains to this present time, no more can be done. The season of trial and of labor for our fellows is over ; it is the hour of sleep. The time of study, for this life, is over ; the time of earthly plans ; the time of bold adventure ; it is the hour of sleep. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." And yet that grave is not so much a tomb as a resting-place, a cemetery. How much more lovely and more Christian would our graveyards be if

they had more of heaven and less of earth ; more of rest in that blessed sleep, and less of the restless pursuit of human glory ; more of our oneness in Christ, and less of our earthly caste and separation ! J. W. A.

24. In wisdom Thou hast made them all. The natural and appropriate reflection from such a survey of God's works in the material world and in His general providence. What wisdom shines forth in all these wonderful adaptations of earth to man and beast ! C.—Every essence created or uncreated hath its final cause, and some positive end both of its essence and operation ; this is the cause I grope after in the works of nature, on this hangs the providence of God ; to raise so beautiful a structure as the world and the creatures thereof was but His art, but their sundry and divided operations with their predestinated ends are from the treasury of His wisdom. *Browne*.—How many millions of wonders doth the very face of the earth offer me ; which of these herbs, flowers, trees, leaves, seeds, fruits, is there ; what beast, what worm, wherein we may not see the footsteps of a Deity ? wherein we may not read infiniteness of power, of skill ? What shall we say to thee, the Maker of all these ? “ O Lord, how wonderful are Thy works in all the world ! in wisdom hast thou made them all.” And in all these Thou spakest, and they were done. Thy will is Thy word, and Thy word is Thy deed. *Bishop H.*

The countless numbers, the immense distances, the prodigious magnitudes, and the regular movements of the heavenly bodies, present views of the might, the majesty, and the wisdom of the Supreme Being, such as overwhelm the mind with devout amazement. These views have increased in clearness and extent, in proportion to the progress of science and of astronomical discovery. No faults or blemishes are ever detected ; but as the researches of philosophy have extended, new causes of admiration have been ever presenting themselves in every department of nature that has come under the cognizance of man. *R. Wardlaw*.—The pure light which gilds the whole world around is not a colorless, nor even a one-colored ray, but is the blending of all the prismatic hues ; and every substance absorbs and rejects these hues in varying degrees, and hence the manifold beauty which surrounds us on every side. Search where we will, every climate has its own varieties of flora and fauna, its own peculiarities of soil and vegetation, its own development of life. And the geologist has disclosed to us vast ages of bygone time teeming with active exist-

ence ; animals as perfect as those of the present day, and as well fitted to perform their part in the world's great drama, and yet filling us with astonishment as we notice how unlike they are to everything which exists now. And the vast and gigantic vegetation among which they roamed is of forms which, if they now exist at all, do so only in dwarfed and stunted growth. Wherever we look we feel that variety is the law of creation. In the words of the Psalmist, we exclaim, “ O Lord, how manifold are Thy works ! ” R. P. S.

The indications of wisdom are the more perfect and complete in proportion to the extent of the plan, the diversity and complicated nature of the operations to be performed, and the greatness of the exigencies to be provided for, in effecting a given result. The plan of the Almighty's works has no limits ; His operations are infinitely diversified ; exigencies without end have to be provided for ; but Divine wisdom comprehends the whole, meets every exigency, and secures the ultimate fulfilment of all His purposes. If we look through the economy of nature we shall see these features of wisdom illustrated in all God's works. *W. Cooke*.

The earth is full of Thy riches. As of old, at the foundation of the earth, the submerging waters at His word fled “ above the firmament,” or “ hasted ” into the channels prepared for them, so still, within the narrower “ bound ” that He has set lest they “ cover the earth ” again, “ they go up by the mountains, they go down by the valleys.” The cloud-wains are overturned upon the heights where they have climbed, for He “ watereth the hills from His chambers ”—those same “ chambers ” in the salted sea—the “ springs go through the valleys,” they “ run among the hills ” and “ the earth is satisfied.” Considering that even in our day the “ actual process of producing rain is not yet fully known ; ” considering the variety of the powers that conjoin in the process described—gravitation, light, heat, electricity, elastic diffusion ; considering the tremendous energy involved, since “ to evaporate water enough to cover one hundred miles surface with *one inch* of rain requires force equal to the combustion of *half a million tons* of coal,” do not these words that follow seem most fit : “ O Lord, how manifold are Thy works ! in wisdom hast Thou made them all ; the earth is full of Thy riches.” *J. B. Thomas*.

25. Here is the sea, great and wide on all hands ; there are moving things, and without number, small animals with great. The exclaima-

tion or reflection in the preceding verse affords a transition to the survey of other parts of the creation, no less striking in themselves and as proofs or illustrations of the Maker's wisdom. *Such is the sea, or here, for instance, is the sea,* are the phrases which would probably be used in our idiom to introduce the first example. The same thing was probably intended by the Hebrew phrase, *this (is) the sea*, as if the speaker at the same time pointed to it. A.

Things innumerable, both small and great. The number of minute forms of animal life is indeed beyond all reckoning; a single phosphorescent wave may bear millions of infusoria, and around a fragment of rock armies of microscopic beings may gather. Nor are these tiny creatures the only tenants of the sea, for it contains gigantic mammals which exceed in bulk those which range the land, and a vast host of huge fishes which wander among the waves, and hide in the caverns of the sea. S.

26. *There the ships go—leviathan—this (that) Thou hast formed to play therein.* While the ships connect the sea with man's activity and interests, leviathan, the standing representative of aquatic monsters, may be here put for the population of the sea itself. *To play therein*, as in his native element. (Compare Job 40 : 20.) A.—*Leviathan* is made to "*play in the sea*;" he hath nothing to do as man hath, that "*goes forth to his work*;" he hath nothing to fear as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters. It is pity any of the children of men, that have nobler powers and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world like the leviathan into the waters, to play therein, spending all their time in pastime. H.

28. *Thou givest to them, they gather; Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled (with) food.* The point of the significant antithesis is this, that God as easily bestows as they receive. He has only to give, they have only to gather. He has but to open His hand, and they are instantly provided, even to satiety. *Filled*, satisfied, abundantly supplied, as in v. 13. A.

God is a bountiful Benefactor. He gives the creatures their meat; He opens His hand, and they are filled with good. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good Housekeeper, that provides for so large a family. They are patient expectants from Him. They all wait upon Him; they seek their food according to the natural instinct God has put into them, and in the proper season for it; and affect not any other food or at any other time

than nature has ordained; they do their part for the obtaining of it; what God gives them they gather, and expect not that Providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with; they are filled with good; they desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our discontent and dissatisfaction with our lot. H.

To make our reliance upon Providence both pious and rational, we should in every great enterprise we take in hand prepare all things with that care, diligence, and activity, as if there were no such thing as Providence for us to depend on; and again, when we have done all this we should as wholly and humbly depend upon it as if we had made no preparations at all. And this is a rule of practice which will never fail or shame any who shall venture their all upon it. *South.*

29. *Thou hidest Thy face, they are confounded; Thou withdrawest their breath, they expire, and to their dust return.* The hiding of God's face here means the suspension or withdrawing of the various benefits before described. *They are troubled* is, in every case, a feeble version of one of the strongest words in the language. Even *confounded*, though much stronger, does not perfectly convey the idea, which is that of being agitated, terror-stricken, or convulsed. A.

29, 30. *The preservation of the world rests continually on the same foundation as the creation—viz., on God's word of command, which He utters continually, or, as it is also expressed, sends forth; and it rests just as continually on the Divine Spirit, which He causes ever to go forth.* The main passage for this Divine communication of the Spirit which continues in the preservation of the world is this: "*Thou takest away their (the creatures') spirit, and they die, and turn again to their dust; Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, and they are created; and Thou renewest the form of the earth.*" *Oehler.*—That is a true axiom in divinity, *Providence is creation continued.* Now the Spirit of God, who created at first, creates to this day: "*Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created.*" The work of creation was finished in the first six days of the world, but the work of creation is renewed every day, and so continued to the end of the world. Successive providential creation as well as original creation is ascribed to the Spirit. "*And Thou renewest the face of the earth.*" God makes a new world every year, sending forth His Spirit, or quickening power, in the rain and sun to renew the face of the earth. And as the Lord sends forth His power in provi-

dential mercies, so in providential judgments.
Caryl.

As creation is the will of God that things should exist and begin to be, so providence is the will of God that things should continue to be. The created world continues by the very same power which caused it to begin. This preservation of all things is the first act of Providence, and that without which other acts would have been impossible. None but God, the infinite One, can be conceived of as competent to so great a work. It demands for its execution *omniscience*, to know the universe which is to be preserved, and to know how to preserve it; *omnipresence*, to apply this Divine knowledge in every place; and *omnipotence*, to carry out the amazing work on the immensity of things.
J. W. A.

30. Thou renewest the face of the earth.

The first voice we hear speaks directly for God, for the Divine existence and presence with us in His works. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Nature says in her heart, and in every color and feature of her flushing face; "There is a God, and He is here!" The spring sings a clear song of the Divine faithfulness. Every spring is with God the keeping of covenant. He is, as it were, conducting an argument as to His own fidelity. The season tells us softly and melodiously of Divine tenderness. God takes this season of the year to tell us especially what tenderness, what delicacy, what colorings of exquisite beauty there are in His nature. In Him are all the archetypes of beauty and all the fountains of tenderness; we may therefore commit ourselves and all we have to His keeping. Spring has a voice of good cheer to all who are serving God faithfully and seeking good ends for themselves or for others, although as yet with little apparent result. For *when* does it come? Immediately after the winter. This tells us never to despair, never to despond. God needs the winter for souls to prepare for the spring; but He never forgets to bring the spring when the time has come. The spring has a voice which sounds away into the far future, and foretells "the time of the restitution of all things." Spring gives announcement of the general resurrection from the dead, while it tells us that all our earthly time is the spring season of our existence. *A. Raleigh.*

31-35. The Psalm closes with the prayer that the glory of that God who has thus manifested His glory in creation may endure forever, and that He who looked with loving approbation upon His works when they were first created, pronouncing all "very good," may ever rejoice

in them; for He is a God awful in His majesty, one whose look makes the earth tremble, one whose touch consumes the mountains, one who could in a moment blot out the creation He has made. P.—A greater truth still succeeds and forms the climax of the Psalm (a truth Humboldt, with all his admiration of it, notices not, and which gives a Christian tone to the whole), "*The Lord shall rejoice in His works.*" He contemplates a yet more perfect Cosmos. He is "to consume sinners" and sin "out of" this fair universe; and then, when man is wholly worthy of His dwelling, shall God say of both it and him with a yet deeper emphasis than when He said it at first, "It is very good." And with an ascription of blessing to the Lord does the poet close this almost angelic descant upon the works of nature, the glory of God, and the prospects of man. It is not merely the unity of the Cosmos that He has displayed in it, but its progression as connected with the parallel progress of man; its thorough dependence on one Infinite Mind; the "increasing purpose" which runs along it, and its final purification, when it shall blossom into the "bright consummate flower" of the new heavens and the new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness;" this is the real burden and the peculiar glory of the one hundred and fourth Psalm. *Gilfillan.*

32. God has only to look at the earth to make it quake. He has only to touch the mountains and they smoke. His controlling and terrifying acts are as prompt and easy as His acts of grace. There seems to be a reference to the words of Moses in describing the effects of the theophany at Sinai, when its summit smoked, and its very roots or bases were on fire. To those familiar with the constant use of mountains as a symbol of great monarchies, this verse would necessarily suggest the thought that God's power over states is no less absolute than that which He exercises over individuals, or over the inanimate creation.

33. *I will sing to Jehovah while I live, I will make music to my God while I still (exist).* This is the Psalmist's conclusion from the view which he has taken, with respect to his own interest and duty. If the Lord be such a God to all His creatures, then I can do no better than expend the remainder of my life in praising Him. The two verbs are those continually joined to denote vocal and instrumental praise. The phrase translated *while I live* means literally *in my life or lives*. A.—This resolution is the use which he makes of the endless duration of the glory of God, and will extend to all other service as well as praise. To serve other things or to serve

ourselves is to waste a service upon that which is nothing. In devoting ourselves to God we serve Him by whom all things are what they are ; who hath both eternal knowledge to remember our service, and eternal goodness to reward it. *Charnock.*

34. My meditation of Him shall be sweet. Meditation is the calm and quiet dwelling of the mind upon a great fact till that fact has time to get into the mind and pervade it with its influence. Meditation is the quiet thinking on single truths, the steady setting of attentive thought drawn away from other things and concentrated on this alone. *E. Garrett.*—Only man can meditate. Only renewed man's meditation is sweet to himself or his God. *M.*—Not merely will he sing ; he will ponder incessantly on that with which his heart is specially filled, for never was there more sublime *material* for thought. What has such *power* of blessing as to meditate on God, the infinitely Rich, the eternally Faithful, the spotlessly holy, the unparalleled in mercy, the Sun of His people, the Fountain of all blessing ; to delight one's self in the contemplation of His marvellous works and ways ; to wander, as it were, in the sanctuary of His word, and to lose one's self in the ocean of His glory ? Meditation regarding Him raises our *spirit* above all the vicissitudes around us. It sustains our *courage* amid all that fails and forsakes us. It hallows our *life*, because to the humblest occupation it lends a more exalted devotion, for the most wearisome duty it imparts life and energy, and in the daily conflict with sin it provides an invincible helper. *Van O.*

I will be glad in the Lord. Sweet meditation causes gladness in the Lord, inspires us with love to Him, and inclines us to ascribe the glory of all we enjoy to Him. Saints in all ages have one and the same delightful object to meditate upon ; the soul under the sweet exercise of grace knows no end of it ; nor how to leave off meditating on Him who hath loved us poor sinners with an everlasting love, and saved us with an everlasting salvation. His person is wonderful, God and man in one Christ ; the love of Christ passeth knowledge ; the offices of Christ, as King, Priest, and Prophet, Mediator, Surety, Redeemer, Saviour, how glorious in their nature ! The blood of Christ, how precious ! His righteousness, how perfect ! His death, how affecting ! His resurrection, how joyful ! The salvation of Christ, how comforting ! His intercession, how prevailing ! His grace in the heart, how sin-subduing and soul-purifying ! His almighty power in keeping us through faith unto eternal salvation, how ani-

inating ! and the perfect sight and full enjoyment of Jesus in glory, how transporting ! Contemplations on these blessed subjects will cause us to cry out : " My meditation of Him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord." *W. Mason.*

The key to the frame of mind expressed in this verse is contained in a single word of the first : " Lord *my* God." Then only, but then assuredly, when the unseen Jehovah has become to us in the absolute sense of the words not merely *God*, but personally *our* God, toward whom through faith we stand in the closest, most cordial relation ; then, when we contemplate Him in the light of His own revelation, in the kingdom of nature, but specially in that of grace, with a clearer belief ; when, above all, our conscience in spite of all imperfections testifies of unfeigned uprightness before Him ; then we not merely say, " My meditation on Him shall be sweet," but, " I will rejoice in the Lord ;" and so the Psalm of life ends at last in this final chord, " Praise the Lord, O my soul !" *Van O.*

35. The truest, highest harmony of creation is this : God finding pleasure in His creatures, His reasonable creatures finding their joy in Him. But this harmony has been rudely broken ; the sweet notes of the vast instrument of the universe are " jangled out of tune." Sin is the discord of the world. Sin has changed the order into disorder. Hence the prophetic hope (*v.* 35) that sinners shall be consumed, that the wicked shall be no more, and thus the earth shall be purified, the harmony be restored, and God once more, as at the first, pronounce His creation " very good." In the prospect of such a consummation, the poet calls upon his own soul, and upon all around him, to bless and praise Jehovah. *P.*

This is the first place where hallelujah (" *Praise ye the Lord* ") occurs in the Book of Psalms. It is produced by a retrospect of *creation*, and by the contemplation of God's goodness in the preservation of all the creatures of His hand, and also by a prospective view of that future Sabbath when, by the removal of evil men from communion with the good, God will be enabled to look on His works, as He did on the first Sabbath, before the Tempter had marred them, and see " everything very good." *Chr. Wordsworth.*

This is the first time that we meet with *hallelujah*, and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked ; and the last time we meet with it, it is upon the like occasion ; when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burden of the song, " *hallelujah*"

(Rev. 19 : 1, 3, 4, 6). H.—The connection of thought between this closing verse and the rest of the Psalm does not lie on the surface, but beneath it. When we come fully into sympathy with the writer, impressed as he was with the glory of God in all His works, with His goodness, His love, His parental care of every living thing, we shall begin to understand why he should cry out, Let the enemies of such a God be consumed from the face of the earth ; let them be no more ! As for me, my whole being cries out, “ Bless the Lord, O my soul ! ” Oh, all ye people, praise the Lord ! C.

The Psalms afford unquestionable evidence of a profound sensibility to nature. On the whole, they enter little into details ; look at nature in the mass, and view the natural almost exclusively in relation to the supernatural. Grandeur, solemnity, sublimity, awful thoughtfulness about man, not color, softness, or warmth of sentiment are their characteristics. A Divine reserve, it may be added, guards their sublimity from extravagance. *Humboldt*.

In the grand generalizations of *Humboldt* there are some admirable disclosures of the nature of the connection between the physical phenomena of sublimity and beauty, and their exciting effect upon the soul. The following passage from the *Cosmos* goes far toward the spiritual light going and returning between God's two revelations of the Scriptures and the worlds. “ In the uniform plain, bounded only by the distant horizon, where the lowly heather, the cistus, or waving grasses deck the soil ; on the ocean shore, where the waves, softly rippling over the beach, leave a track, green with the weeds of the sea ; everywhere the mind is penetrated by the same sense of the grandeur and vast expanse of nature, revealing to the soul, by a mysterious inspiration, the existence of laws that regulate the forces of the universe. Mere communion with nature, mere contact with the free air, exercise a soothing yet strengthening influence on the wearied spirit, calm the storm of passion, and soften the heart when shaken by sorrow to its inmost depths. Everywhere in every region of the globe, in every stage of intellectual culture, the same sources of enjoyment are alike vouchsafed to man. The earnest and solemn thoughts awakened by a communion with nature intuitively arise from a presentiment of the order and harmony pervading the whole universe, and from the contrast we draw between the narrow limits of our own existence and the image of infinity revealed on every side, whether we look upward to the starry vault of heaven, or scan the far-

stretching plain before us, or seek to trace the dim horizon across the vast expanse of ocean.”
G. B. C.

The true conception is given in the Old Testament, which finds God not simply the Creator of the universe, but ever therein. The first chapter of Genesis has a counterpart in Psalm 104. Creation in the beginning by an absolute fiat passes over into an unfolding preservation by a continued presence. The whole universe exists in God, as the stars in the ether, as the clouds in the air ; the whole universe floats on the pulsing bosom of God. Nature is His outer garment. All her movements are of Him : the thunder is His voice, the lightning from His mouth, the earthquake His anger, the light His garment, the clouds His chariot, the winds His messengers, the ice from His breath. His throne is above the cherubim, symbols of the living powers of nature. But He is never identified with nature. His immanence is not pantheistic. He giveth life to all, is the life of all, is in all natural phenomena, but is independent, apart, separate, and Lord of all. *E. L. Curtis*.—It is not easy to conceive a sublimer characteristic of the Hebrew poetry than this, that it treats all creation as a mere shadow, and finds the essence of its beauty, as well as the sustaining power of its life, in the spiritual world. *W. R. H. Hutton*.

God, the everywhere present, enwrapping, upholding, penetrating through and through each creature of His hand, yet in His uncreated essence distinct from all, is before the Psalmist's soul. Man, if he would, cannot be where God is not, cannot place himself outside this all-pervading ubiquity of God. Thus the universe is the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in it. This is the most direct lesson of Psalm 104. God is as truly present with the lowest as with the highest forms of life ; He is as present with the lowest, and wildest, and fiercest animals, with every variety of tree and plant, with primary rocks, and with slow processes of mineral transformations proceeding through unmeasured ages deep beneath the earth's crust, with heavenly bodies moving, in their undeviating obedience to law, through trackless space, as with glorified men, as with archangels. He cannot but be thus everywhere present ; He cannot contract His illimitable Being, and make corners in His universe where He is not. And there are not, properly speaking, degrees of His presence, although there are various modes of its manifestation. He is everywhere, in all the proper intensity and force of His Being, simply because He is God. *H. P. L.*

Which way soever God governs the world, and what influence soever He has over men's minds, we are sure that the governing and preserving His own workmanship is so plainly a perfection that it must belong to a being infinitely perfect; and there is such a chain in things—those of the greatest consequence arising often from small and inconsiderate ones—that we cannot imagine a Providence, unless we believe everything to be within its care and view. *Bishop Burnet.*—There is no power in nature, or in works of man's device, but God; no law but Divine volition; no process but Divine performance. Gravitation is one mode of Providence; magnetism, another; electricity, another; Providence is attraction and repulsion, cohesion and explosion, flood-tide and ebb-tide, sunrise and sunset, motion and rest. All the energies of nature are methods of Divine activity, and all the phenomena of nature are phases of the one eternal Presence. *F. H. Hedge.*

The grand simplicity of the law of attraction which pervades the universe, controlling equally what is vast and what is minute, the near and the remote, constraining all to orderly and harmonious movement, exalts our conception of the sublime control of God's great law of love, by which the universe of moral being is controlled and harmonized, and made to circle around Himself. In "the permanent and stable course of nature, resulting from the balance and neutralization of contrary tendencies;" centripetal struggling with centrifugal forces; winds battling with waves, heat with cold, acid with alkali, pole set over against pole, free play allowed to mutually conflicting affinities and opposing properties, yet all so adjusted as to form a perfect equilibrium which the roll of ages cannot disturb, there is presented an impressive counterpart to God's providential agency, in which all things work together for good, in which evil agencies and sinful passions and wicked men are made to thwart and check each other, and to promote instead of disturbing the wise and holy and beneficent purposes of the great Creator. *W. H. G.*—The phenomena which prove the existence of God also demonstrate that He delights in the happiness of His creatures. For it is conceivable that the world might have been filled with adaptations as wonderful as any of the existing ones, but all of them of a diametrically opposite character. The exquisitely formed joints of the animal frame might, in the very delicacy of their organism, have communicated the more exquisite pain. The plants of the earth might have grown to nourish the bodies of animals only as the food spread

through the organs to torture every member. The sunbeams, instead of gladdening all nature, might have struck every living being as with a succession of spear-points to harass and annoy. How delightful to find that every adaptation indicating design also indicates benevolence, and that we have as clear evidence of the goodness as of the very existence of God! *M' Cosh.*

The glorious Person who in the Scriptures is designated by the appellation, the Word of God, "in the beginning created the heavens and the earth," and said, "Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament." His hand also lighted up the flame of the sun, and kindled the stars. He "upholds" the universe "by the word of His power," and preserves order and regularity throughout all the parts of this amazing system. In the heavens He shines with inexpressible splendor. On the earth He lives and works, provides and sustains, and satisfies the wants of every living thing. Throughout immensity He quickens into life, action, and enjoyment the innumerable multitudes of intelligent beings. The universe which He made, He also governs. The worlds of which it is composed He rolls through the infinite expanse with an almighty and unwearied hand, and preserves them in their respective places and motions with an unerring harmony. From the vast storehouse of His bounty He feeds and clothes the endless millions whom His hand has made, and from the riches of His own unchangeable mind, informs the innumerable host of intelligent creatures with ever improving virtue, dignity, and glory. To all these He allots the respective parts which they are qualified to act in the boundless system of good which His wisdom contrived, and His power has begun to execute; furnishes them with the means of being useful in His eternal kingdom; and thus prepares them to be amiable and excellent in His sight, and instruments of perpetually increasing good to each other. At the head of this great kingdom He "sits upon a throne high and lifted up," "far exalted above all heavens;" surveys, with intuitive view, and with Divine complacency, the amazing work which His voice has called into being, and beholds it increasing without intermission in happiness, wisdom, and virtue, and advancing with a regular progress toward consummate glory and perfection. *Dwight.*

Nature will serve him who serves her God; and all her varied powers and agencies will rejoice to obey the behests and minister to the welfare of one who is the loved and loving child of their great Master and Lord. The earth will be fulfilling its proper function in yielding you

bread, and the heavens in shedding their sweet influences on your path. For you the morning will dawn and the evening descend. For you "the winds will blow, earth rest, heavens move, and fountains flow." You will be able to claim a peculiar property in the works of your Father's hand and the bounties of your Father's providence. You will have served yourself heir to Him who is the Universal Proprietor, and become "heir of God, and joint heir with Christ." And so "the world" and the fulness thereof will become "yours," because "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *Caird.*

We see everywhere emblems of Him. Every day we walk amid the "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace," and in that meaning of the word sacrament, the true and Christian view of this wonderful world is that it is all one great sacrament. All the *elements* stand as types of spiritual things. The sunshine is to speak to us of the "light of the world," the life of men. The wind blows, an emblem of that Spirit which, though He comes low and soft as befits a "Comforter," can rise and wax into a tempest against all "the lofty and lifted up." The water speaks of the stream of life and the drink for thirsty souls; and the fire of His purity and of His wrath. All *objects* are consecrated to Him. The trees of the field, in a thousand places, speak of the "root of David," and the vine of which we are all branches. The everlasting mountains are His "righteousness," the mighty deep His "judgments." All the *processes* of nature have been

laid hold of by Him. The gentle dew falls ■ promise, and the lashing rain forebodes another storm, when many a sand-built house shall be swept away. Every spring is a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead, every harvest a promise of the coming of His kingdom and the blessed issues of all service for Him. All *living things*, in like manner, testify of Him. In that sense, as in others, He is Lord over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the beasts of the field. All *relations* between men testify of Him. Father and mother, brother and friend, husband, parent and children, they are all consecrated for this purpose. In a word, every act of our life sets forth some aspect of our Lord and of our relation to Him, from the moment when we open our eyes in the morning, all through the busy day, when our work may speak to us of Him that worketh continually, and our rest may prophesy to us of the "rest that remaineth for the people of God;" and our journeyings may tell of the journey of the soul to God, and our home may testify of the home which is above the skies—up to the hour when night falls, and sleep, the image of death, speaks to us of the last solemn moment, when we shall close the eyes of our body on earth, to open those of our soul on the realities of eternity; when we shall no more "see through a glass darkly, but face to face." All things, and all acts, and this whole wonderful universe, proclaim to us the Lord our Father, Christ our love, Christ our hope, our portion, and our joy! A. M.

PSALM CV.

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name;

Make known his doings among the peoples.

2 Sing unto him, sing praises unto him;

Talk [or, *meditate*] ye of all his marvellous works.

3 Glory ye in his holy name:

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

4 Seek ye the LORD and his strength;

Seek his face evermore.

5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done;

His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,

Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

7 He is the LORD our God:

His judgments are in all the earth.

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
The word which he commanded to a thousand generations;

9 The covenant which he made with Abraham,

And his oath unto Isaac

- 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute,
To Israel for an everlasting covenant :
- 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
The lot of your inheritance :
- 12 When they were but a few men in number ;
Yea, very few, and sojourners in it ;
- 13 And they went about from nation to nation,
From one kingdom to another people.
- 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong ;
Yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes ;
- 15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed ones,
And do my prophets no harm.
- 16 And he called for a famine upon the land ;
He brake the whole staff of bread.
- 17 He sent a man before them ;
Joseph was sold for a servant.
- 18 His feet they hurt with fetters ;
He was laid in *chains* of iron :
- 19 Until the time that his word came to pass ;
The word of the LORD tried him.
- 20 The king sent and loosed him ;
Even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free.
- 21 He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his substance :
- 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure,
And teach his senators wisdom.
- 23 Israel also came into Egypt ;
And Jacob sojourn'd in the land of Ham.
- 24 And he increased his people greatly,
And made them stronger than their adversaries.
- 25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
To deal subtilly with his servants.
- 26 He sent Moses his servant,
And Aaron whom he had chosen.
- 27 They set among them his signs,
And wonders in the land of Ham.
- 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark ;
And they rebelled not against his words.
- 29 He turned their waters into blood,
And slew their fish.
- 30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
In the chambers of their kings.
- 31 He spake, and there came swarms of flies,
And lice in all their borders.
- 32 He gave them hail for rain,
And flaming fire in their land.
- 33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees ;
And brake the trees of their borders.
- 34 He spake, and the locust came,
And the cankerworm, and that without number,
- 35 And did eat up every herb in their land,
And did eat up the fruit of their ground.
- 36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land,
The chief of all their strength.
- 37 And he brought them forth with silver and gold :
And there was not one feeble person among his tribes.
- 38 Egypt was glad when they departed ;
For the fear of them had fallen upon them.
- 39 He spread a cloud for a covering ;
And fire to give light in the night.
- 40 They asked, and he brought quails,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
- 41 He opened the rock, and waters gushed out ;
They ran in the dry places *like* a river.
- 42 For he remembered his holy word,
And Abraham his servant.
- 43 And he brought forth his people with joy,
And his chosen with singing.
- 44 And he gave them the lands of the nations ;
And they took the labour of the peoples in possession :
- 45 That they might keep his statutes,
And observe his laws.
- PRAISE YE THE LORD !

PSALM 104 expatiates upon the works of God in the material world, its creation and its agencies ; this Psalm gives a corresponding view of *God's hand in history*, His ways with His covenant people from the promise of Canaan to Abraham and the patriarchs to its fulfilment under Joshua in locating the tribes safely in that land of promise. C.

This Psalm, like the seventy-eighth and the one hundred and sixth, has for its theme the early history of Israel, and God's wonders wrought on behalf of the nation ; but it differs from both those Psalms in the *intention* with

which it pursues this theme. The seventy-eighth Psalm is didactic ; its object is to teach a lesson ; it recalls the past, as conveying instruction and warning for the present. The one hundred and sixth Psalm is a Psalm of penitential confession. The history of the past appears in it only as a history of Israel's sin. In this Psalm, on the other hand, the mighty acts of Jehovah for His people from the first dawn of their national existence are recounted as a fitting subject for thankfulness, and as a ground for future obedience. Those interpositions of God are especially dwelt upon

which have a reference to the fulfilment of His promise, which exhibit most clearly His faithfulness to His covenant. Hence the series begins with the covenant made with Abraham, tracing all the steps in its fulfilment to the occupation of the Promised Land. This is commenced, as the theme of the Psalm, in vs. 8-11.

The first fifteen verses are found in 1 Chr. 16: 8-22 (with some slight variations), as the first portion of the festal song which, on the day when the ark of God was brought to its resting-place on Zion, was delivered by David into the hands of Asaph and his brethren, "to give thanks unto Jehovah." P.—The first fifteen verses tell that it is sovereign grace that ruleth over all—it is a sovereign God. Out of a fallen world He takes whom He pleases—individuals, families, nations. He chose *Israel* long ago, that they might be the objects of grace, and their land the theatre of its display. *A. Bonar.*

1-6. The greatness of God's love, as manifested to His people in their history, calls for the fullest acknowledgment. The Psalmist would have Israel sound forth His praises among all nations. They are not to sit down in idle satisfaction with their own privileges. His "doings" (v. 1), His "wondrous works" (vs. 3, 5), His "tokens," "the judgments of His mouth" (v. 5), "His holy name" (v. 3), as the revelation of His character and attributes—all these are to form the subject of loud thanksgiving—all these are to become, through Israel, the heritage of the world. P.

1. Call upon His name. The original meaning of the phrase is, *call (Him) by His name, i.e.,* give Him the descriptive title most expressive of His Divine perfections; or more specifically, call Him by His name Jehovah, *i.e.,* ascribe to Him the attributes which it denotes—to wit, eternity and self-existence, together with that covenant relation to His people which, though not denoted by the name, was constantly associated with it, and therefore necessarily suggested by it. A.

4. Seek His face evermore. Seek to have His favor to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be forever seeking it in an infinite progression, and yet be forever satisfied in it. H.—Such is our dependence upon God, that we are obliged not only to do everything for His sake, but also to seek from Him the very power so to do. And this happy necessity of having recourse to Him

in all our wants, instead of being grievous to us should be our greatest consolation. What a happiness it is, that we are allowed to speak to Him with confidence; to open our hearts and hold familiar conversation with Him by prayer! *Fénelon.*

The God whom men need and can know and love, the God who is a Spirit, comes near to us in descriptions cast in the mould of humanity, and loses none of His purely spiritual essence, nor any of His infinitude, because we have learned to speak of the eye, and arm, and the hand, and the heart, and the face of the Lord. The eye of the Lord is His all-seeing knowledge; the arm and the hand of the Lord are substantially the same, though with certain shades of difference in the ideas which they suggest, and may be said to express the active energy of the Divine nature. The face of the Lord, we may say, is that aspect or side of the Divine nature which is turned to man, and is perceptible by him. There is no limit to our consciousness of God's loving presence and help, except that drawn by ourselves. He fills the vessels we bring, be they large or small. And there is no possibility of any longing after Him remaining unsatisfied. No hunger of heart, no aching emptiness, no eyes failing with looking for the visitor who never comes, no pining away in sick disappointment, have any place in the relation of the soul to God. So sufficient is He, so near, so infinitely desirous to impart Himself, that He needs but the narrowest opening to pour His fulness into the heart. To seek is to find, to wish for God is to have God. "Seek His face evermore," and your life will be bright because you will walk in the light of His countenance always. That face will brighten the darkness of death, and "make a sunshine in that shady place." A. M.

5, 6. Because they are Abraham's seed, because they are God's chosen, because they are Jacob's children, heritors of the covenant and the promises, they are bound beyond all others to "remember" what God has done for them. On the other hand, God, who made the covenant with their fathers, "remembers" it (v. 8), "for His part will surely keep and perform" it.

7. The Psalmist begins himself that praise of God to which he has exhorted his people. And first he extols "the covenant," "the word" (or promise), the "oath" by which God had bound Himself to the patriarchs, and which He "remembered," *i.e.,* fulfilled when He brought them into the land of Canaan. *Our God*, by covenant, but also Judge and Ruler of all nations. P.

8. He hath remembered His covenant forever. Here is the basis of all His dealings with His people; He had entered into covenant with them in their father Abraham, and to this covenant He remained faithful. The exhortation to *remember* (in v. 5) receives great force from the fact that God has remembered. To us it should be matter for deepest joy that never in any instance has the Lord been unmindful of His covenant engagements, nor will He be so world without end. S.

15. Mine anointed. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had no external anointing. They were, however, called "*anointed*," because they were separated by God from the multitude of wicked men, and endowed with the Spirit and His gifts, of which the oil was an emblem.

Mollerus.—**Prophets.** The prophet is the forth-speaker; the term laying stress on the utterance, and not upon the vision. The Hebrew word comes from a root which means to bubble up and overflow as from a full fountain. But the fulness of the true prophets of Jehovah was of the Divine Spirit within them. The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The first application of the word is to Abraham (Gen. 20:7); although, long before Abraham, "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied" (Jude 14). *D. Fraser.*

16. From this point, as far as v. 38, the history of the nation in Egypt is followed, with a recognition of the Divine hand fashioning it at every step, and at every step accomplishing the fulfilment of the promise.

16-22. First, the preliminary steps in the history of Joseph. The famine in Canaan was no chance occurrence; God called for it. Joseph's position in Egypt was no accident; God had sent him thither; so he himself traces the hand of God. P.

16. *And He called (for) a famine on the land; every staff of bread He brake.* The Psalmist passes from the Patriarchal to the Egyptian period of the history, by stating the occasion of Israel's migration into Egypt. The meaning of the first clause seems to be, that He summoned famine, as His instrument or servant, to come down upon the land, as sent from above—that is to say, from Himself. The meaning of the last clause is, that the people were deprived of every customary means and source of subsistence. The figure of a staff or stay is a Mosaic one. It is near akin to the description of food as staying or sustaining the heart.

19. *Until the time that his word came (to pass), the saying of Jehovah tried him.* The last verb properly denotes the assaying of metals, but is figuratively applied to moral trial and purgation. The most probable meaning is, that during the two years which intervened between Joseph's explanation of the prisoners' dreams and the favorable issue to which it ultimately led, his faith in the Divine promise, both to himself and to his people, was severely but favorably tried. A.—The story of Joseph is to all men forever the best proof of the working of the hand of Providence. As through the life of Joseph, so through our life, there are threads which connect the different scenes and bind together the destinies of the different actors. This history and the inspired commentary on it in Psalm 105 teach us the wonderful continuity of God's plan and the oneness of the thread that binds together the histories of Israel and of Egypt. *C. H. Butcher.*

24. What follows to v. 38 is a *résumé* of the history as given in the first twelve chapters of Exodus, and especially of the plagues. The fifth and sixth plagues, however, are omitted altogether, and the plague of darkness is placed first; in other respects the order of Exodus is observed. P.

34. Without number. A swarm [of locusts], which was observed in India in 1825, occupied a space of forty English square miles, contained at least forty millions of locusts in one line, and cast a long shadow on the earth. And Major Moore thus describes an immense army of these animals which ravaged the Mah-ratta country: "The column they composed extended five hundred miles; and so compact was it when on the wing, that, like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun, so that no shadow was cast by any object." Brown, in his travels in Africa, states that an area of nearly two thousand square miles was literally covered by them; and Kirby and Spence mention that a column of them was so immense that they took four hours to fly over the spot where the observer stood. *Kalisch.*

37. It was of the Lord's justice that these bondmen were not allowed to go forth empty-handed. He directed them to borrow (the Hebrew is simply *ask*) of the Egyptians. The last plague made them willing to lend or give. It was but moderate wages for their lifelong services (Ex. 11:2; 12:35, 36). "Not one halting, tottering one in their tribes"—unable to march. C.

38. *Glad was Egypt at their going forth, for their fear had fallen upon them.* This panic ter-

ror, which followed the last plague and facilitated the escape of Israel, accounts for the readiness with which the Egyptians gave whatever was demanded, and completely vindicates the children of Israel from the charge of borrowing what they never meant to pay. The terms used in the history denote the acts of asking and giving, not those of borrowing and lending. A.

39-41. Three of the principal miracles in the wilderness, which sum up the period between the departure from Egypt and the entrance into the promised land. P.

42. *Because He remembered His holy word with Abraham His servant.* This brings us back to the statement in vs. 8, 9, in proof of which this long array of facts has been presented. Nothing of all this would have taken place if God had been forgetful of His covenant. This covenant is here meant by *His holy word*, which is therefore followed by the preposition *with*, as in Ex. 9 : 24, where the covenant is expressly mentioned. A.

44, 45. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and honor and might make a figure among the nations, but that *they might observe His statutes and keep His laws*; that, being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution; that, having a good land given them, they might out of the profits of it bring sacrifices to God's altar; and that, God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive His law, concluding that also designed for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to Him. We are therefore made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah with which the Psalm concludes may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favors, and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. H.—The chosen nation was to be the conservator of truth, the exemplar of morality, the pattern of devotion; everything was so ordered as to place them in advantageous circumstances for fulfilling this trust. Theirs was a high calling and a glorious election. It involved great responsibilities, but it was in itself a distinguished blessing, and one for which the nation was bound to give thanks. Most justly then did the music close with the jubilant but solemn shout of hallelujah—*"Praise ye the Lord!"* S.

The condition of the Israelites in the wilder-

ness and in Canaan alike represent our present state as Christians. Our Christian life is a state of faith and trial; it is also a state of enjoyment. It has the richness of the promised land; it has the marvellousness of the desert. It is a "good land, a land of brooks," etc. And it is still a land which to the natural man seems a wilderness, a "great and terrible wilderness," etc.; where faith is still necessary, and where "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word out of the mouth of the Lord." *Newman.*

The journey of the people through the wilderness represented our pilgrimage through this world; and the land of Canaan was a shadow of the heavenly rest. The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being, it is not our rest, it is not our abode; but the place of our pilgrimage, a passage to eternity. There is much intricacy in the Christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness; the Israelites could not have explored their way but by the direction of the pillar of fire and of the cloud, so the Christian knows not how to explore his path. There are doctrinal difficulties by which we are perplexed, and errors to which we are continually exposed, and which we know not how to escape but by attention to "the light that shineth in a dark place." There are voices that are heard in the wilderness, crying, "Lo here," and "Lo there;" but we must not go after them; we must "search the Scriptures," and ask the guidance of the Spirit, or we shall never have the comfort that arises from right views of truth, nor hear the "voice behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." The way lies through a hostile country, and is therefore discouraging. We pass through an enemy's land. The Israelites were obliged to unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we; on our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armor of God, taking the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith;" we must conquer as well as advance; we must fight our way or die. The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage, and the consequent displeasure of God are discouraging; there are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens His people, though He pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. But with all its discouragements the way of the believer is "a right way." Infinite Wisdom has ordained it, and if you reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage; no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no path too gloomy. There was

no bitter ingredient in your cup that could have been spared; no affliction but what operated to promote the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." You

will look back and acknowledge that Infinite Wisdom directed the darkest path, and caused it to terminate in joy and glory unutterable. *R. Hall.*

PSALM CVI.

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| <p>1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:
 For his mercy <i>endureth</i> for ever.
 2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD,
 Or shew forth all his praise?
 3 Blessed are they that keep judgment,
 And he that doeth righteousness at all times.
 4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour
 that thou bearest unto thy people;
 O visit me with thy salvation:
 5 That I may see the prosperity of thy chosen,
 That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
 That I may glory with thine inheritance.</p> <p>6 We have sinned with our fathers,
 We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
 7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;
 They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;
 But were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea.
 8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,
 That he might make his mighty power to be known.
 9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up:
 So he led them through the depths, as through a wilderness.
 10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them,
 And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
 11 And the waters covered their adversaries:
 There was not one of them left.
 12 Then believed they his words;
 They sang his praise.
 13 They soon forgot his works;
 They waited not for his counsel;</p> | <p>14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
 And tempted God in the desert.
 15 And he gave them their request;
 But sent leanness into their soul.
 16 They envied Moses also in the camp,
 And Aaron the saint of the LORD.
 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
 And covered the company of Abiram.
 18 And a fire was kindled in their company;
 The flame burned up the wicked.
 19 They made a calf in Horeb,
 And worshipped a molten image.
 20 Thus they changed their glory
 For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.
 21 They forgot God their saviour,
 Which had done great things in Egypt;
 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
 And terrible things by the Red Sea.
 23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
 Had not Moses his chosen stood before him
 in the breach,
 To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy <i>them</i>.
 24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land,
 They believed not his word;
 25 But murmured in their tents,
 And hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.
 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand unto them,
 That he would overthrow them in the wilderness:
 27 And that he would overthrow their seed
 among the nations,
 And scatter them in the lands.
 28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor,
 And ate the sacrifices of the dead.
 29 Thus they provoked him to anger with their doings;
 And the plague brake in upon them.
 30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment:
 And so the plague was stayed,</p> |
|---|--|

- 31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness,
Unto all generations for evermore.
- 32 They angered him also at the waters of Meribah,
So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes :
- 33 Because they were rebellious against his spirit,
And he spake unadvisedly with his lips.
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,
As the LORD commanded them ;
- 35 But mingled themselves with the nations,
And learned their works :
- 36 And they served their idols ;
Which became a snare unto them :
- 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons,
- 38 And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan ;
And the land was polluted with blood.
- 39 Thus were they defiled with their works,
And went a whoring in their doings.
- 40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people,
And he abhorred his inheritance.
- 41 And he gave them into the hand of the nations;
And they that hated them ruled over them.
- 42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were brought into subjection under their hand.
- 43 Many times did he deliver them ;
But they were rebellious in their counsel,
And were brought low in their iniquity.
- 44 Nevertheless he regarded their distress,
When he heard their cry :
- 45 And he remembered for them his covenant,
And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
- 46 He made them also to be pitied
Of all those that carried them captives.
- 47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the nations,
To give thanks unto thy holy name,
And to triumph in thy praise.
- 48 BLESSED BE THE LORD, THE GOD
OF ISRAEL,
FROM EVERLASTING EVEN TO
EVERLASTING.
AND LET ALL THE PEOPLE SAY,
AMEN.
PRAISE YE THE LORD.

A CONFESSION OF NATIONAL UNFAITHFULNESS.

THIS is the first of the sixteen Hallelujah Psalms. The others are 111, 113, 117, 135, 141-150. It is retrospective like the preceding, but, unlike it, is penitential. It must probably be assigned to the time of the exile. *De Witt*.—The first of a series of Hallelujah Psalms—Psalms of which the word “hallelujah” is the inscription. As in the last Psalm, so here, the history of Israel is recapitulated. In that it was turned into a thanksgiving; in this it forms the burden of a confession. There God’s mighty acts for His people were celebrated with joy; here His people’s sin is humbly and sorrowfully acknowledged. Nothing is more remarkable in these great historical Psalms than the utter absence of any word or sentiment tending to feed the national vanity. All the glory of Israel’s history is confessed to be due, not to her heroes, her priests, her prophets, but to God; all the failures which are written upon that history, all discomfitures, losses, reverses, the sword, famine, exile, are recognized as the righteous chastisement which the sin of the nation has provoked. This is the strain of such Psalms as the seventy-eighth, the one hundred

and fifth, the one hundred and sixth. This is invariably the tone assumed by all the divinely instructed teachers of the people, by the prophets in their great sermons, by the poets in their contributions to the national liturgy. There is no other poetry in the world of a popular and national kind so full of patriotic sentiment, and yet at the same time marked by so complete an abstinence from all those themes which are commonly found in poetry written for the people. There is not a single ode in honor of Moses or Aaron or Joshua or David; there is not one which sings the glory of the nation, except as that glory is given it of God. The history of the nation, whenever referred to, is referred to almost invariably for the purpose of rebuke and upbraiding, certainly not for the purpose of commendation or self-applause. The Psalm consists of an introduction (vs. 1-5). It then follows the history of Israel as a history of perpetual transgressions, first from Egypt through the wilderness (vs. 7-33), and then in the Holy Land (vs. 34-46), and concludes with prayer for deliverance from the present calamity—viz., the captivity in Babylon (v. 47). P.

1. We have here two arguments for praise, “for He is good; for His mercy endureth for-

ever;" and these two arguments are themselves praises. This first verse is the text of all that which follows; we are now to see how from generation to generation the mercy of God endured to His chosen people. S.

1-5. The first verse is of the nature of a doxological formula, such as we find in some other of these later Psalms. But the second and third verses have an immediate bearing on what follows. What so fitting to introduce the confession of a nation's sin and ingratitude, as the rehearsal of God's goodness manifested to it, and the acknowledgment of the blessedness of those who, instead of despising that goodness, as Israel had done, walked in the ways of the Lord, keeping judgment and doing righteousness (v. 3)? Or, again, what more natural than that the sense of the national privilege, the claim of a personal share in that privilege, should spring in the heart and rise to the lips of one who felt most deeply the national sin and ingratitude? P.

3. Blessed are they that keep judgment. That are of right principles and upright practices; this is real and substantial praising of God. Thanks-doing is the proof of thanksgiving; and the good life of the thankful is the life of thankfulness. Those that say God-a-thank only and no more are not only contumelious, but injurious. Trapp.

7. *Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Thy wondrous works, they did not remember the abundance of Thy mercies, and rebelled upon the sea, at the Red Sea.* The general confession in v. 6 is now followed by a more detailed acknowledgment, beginning with the exodus from Egypt. The *wondrous works* of God, the things done wonderfully by Him for the deliverance of His people, the great body of them did not understand. Even those who referred them to their true source and author did not fully appreciate the end for which they were performed, or enter into the majestic plan in executing which they were permitted to be God's coworkers. The truth of this charge is abundantly established by the narrow, groveling, selfish views and feelings so repeatedly betrayed by the generation which came out of Egypt, showing clearly that they did not *practically understand* God's dealings with them. A.

12, 13. The manifestation of the Almighty on their behalf in dividing the sea, in making a dry path, and overwhelming their enemies in destruction, seemed to arouse their religious natures into enthusiasm. But how soon did this gust of religious faith and feeling pass away! D. Thomas.

13-33. This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations; and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle with application to us Christians (1 Cor. 10 : 5, etc.), for these things were *written for our admonition*, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them. H.

15. He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. It is an awful circumstance, and yet it is true, that our mercies may be our curses. One of the dangers which always beset us is that of placing our confidence in things that are in our sight and within the reach of our hand. And the more these things multiply around us, the greater our danger becomes. Grace is needed by every man, but great grace is needed by the man who gets his request. The eclipsing power of success is fearful. Another symptom of spiritual leanness, and one of the results of having our request, is self-pleasing. It is no calumny to say that pleasure is the god of our times, and that men are shrinking more and more from everything which involves self-oblivion and self sacrifice. But this spirit defeats itself. Pleasure sought for its own sake is difficult to find, more difficult still to retain, and becomes more coy and unattainable the more the pursuit of it becomes the aim and the business of life. More than this, there follows a loss of sympathy with all that helps to build up the spiritual life. There is no life save that of God Himself which possesses a self-perpetuating power; and though the life which is begotten in us by faith is the highest on earth, even that is not immortal if it be denied the food which has been provided for it. Our text speaks to us as with the voice of a trumpet, and rings out the great and impressive truth that we cannot be too guarded in our petitions or in our desires for merely temporal things. Beyond necessities all else should be sought in very humble and willing subordination to the will of God. For who of us knows what beyond these is good for us? Mellor.

16. *And they were envious at Moses in the camp, at Aaron, the holy one of Jehovah.* This is another of their wilderness sins (Num. 16). Aaron is not called the *saint of the Lord* in reference to his personal holiness, which does not seem to have been eminent, but his *holy* (or *consecrated*) one, in reference to his sacerdotal dignity. A.

The saint. The word saint, from *sanctus*, means nothing but an holy person; and an holy person, in the Scripture account, is a believer,

and no other. The Word of God knows no such distinctions as virtuous and vicious men, moral and immoral ; but ranks the whole world into two classes—namely, believers and unbelievers ; children of light and children of darkness ; sinners and saints ; those that are after the flesh and those that are after the Spirit. The one accepted in Christ Jesus ; the other having the wrath of God abiding on them. *Hill.*

24. They despised the pleasant land, not absolutely in itself, for it was “ the glory of all lands,” abounding with things for the support and delight of man ; but considering its distance, a wilderness waste and wild interposing, and the enemies to be encountered, they did not think it worthy of undergoing such hazards and difficulties. The land of Canaan was a type of heaven, both with respect to its pleasantness and the manner of the Israelites obtaining it ; their title to it was derived from the rich bounty of God, therefore it is called the “ land of promise ;” but it was to be possessed by conquest. Thus the celestial Canaan is the pure gift of God ; but the actual enjoyment of it is obtained by victorious resistance against the enemies of our salvation. And carnal men despise this pleasant land, the promise being inseparably joined with precepts of duty and obedience, from which they are averse. But he that chooses sincerely is joyful and vigorous in the use of means for acquiring his most desired good. *Bates.*

The pleasant land was a type of heaven, the good land afar off ; the better country, the land of promise and rest ; in which is fulness of provisions and where there will be no hunger and thirst ; where flows the river of the water of life, and stands the tree of life bearing all manner of fruits ; where there is fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore ; the most delightful company of Father, Son, and Spirit, angels and glorified saints, and nothing to disturb their peace and pleasure neither from within nor from without. And yet this pleasant land may be said to be despised by such who do not care to go through any difficulty to it ; to perform the duties of religion ; to bear reproach for God’s sake ; to go through tribulation ; to walk in the narrow and afflicted way which leads unto it ; and by all such who do not care to part with their sinful lusts and pleasures, but prefer them and the things of this world to the heavenly state. *Gill.*

25. But murmured. Murmuring ! As we proceed with the narrative we are constantly meeting it. They lift up their eyes, and

as the Egyptians pursue, the people murmur. They come to a fountain, the water is bitter, and once more they murmur. Then no bread ; murmurings redoubled. Moses is no longer in the mount ; murmurs. He takes too much upon him ; more murmurs. When shall we reach that promised land ?—murmurs extraordinary, loud murmurs. We are close to the land, but its inhabitants are giants, and their towns walled up to heaven ; and the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs. *Hamilton.*

27. *And to make their seed fall in the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.* As the appointed punishment of the older generation was to die in the wilderness, so that of their descendants was to die in dispersion and captivity among the Gentiles. (See Lev. 26 : 33, 38, and compare Deut. 28 : 32, 36, 64, 68.) The recollection of this threatening must have been peculiarly affecting to the Jews in Babylon.

31. *And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, to generation and generation, even to eternity.* What is here meant is evidently not a justifying act by which Phinehas was saved, but a praiseworthy act for which he, a justified or righteous man already, received the Divine commendation and a perpetual memorial of his faithfulness. The particular reward promised (Num. 26 : 13), that of a perpetual priesthood, is not here mentioned, but was familiar to the mind of every Hebrew reader. A.—This act of zeal for Jehovah was counted unto him for righteousness, inasmuch as he was rewarded for it with the perpetual priesthood. It was indeed an act that had its origin in the faithfulness that had its root in faith, and which for the sake of this its ultimate ground gained for him the acceptance of a righteous man, inasmuch as it proved him to be such. D.—The same thing is said of the *faith* of Abraham (Gen. 15 : 6) ; a striking instance of the fearlessness of expression which is to be found in the Scriptures, as compared with the dogmatic forms of modern controversial theology. P.

34-38. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those that fetched them out of Egypt, for by that time they were well warm in Canaan ; they corrupted themselves and forsook God. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction. The next news we hear is, they “ *were mingled among the heathen,*” made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with

them so that they "*learned their works.*" "*They served their idols*" in the same manner and with the same rites that they served them; and that sin drew on many more and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves. "*They sacrificed their sons and daughters,*" pieces of themselves "*to devils;*" and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror; they "*shed innocent blood,*" the most innocent, for it was infant blood; nay, it was the "*blood of their sons and their daughters.*" See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villainy which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly "*gives them up to a reprobate mind.*" H.

39. *And they were polluted by their own doings, and went a whoring by their own crimes.* They defiled not only the land of promise, but themselves. The figure of spiritual adultery is often used to signify the violation by the chosen people of their covenant with God, which is constantly described as a conjugal relation. This is not stated as an additional offence, but as an aggravating circumstance attending the iniquities already mentioned. A.

44. The Psalmist turns now to the other side of God's dealings with His people. It was not all anger. If they forgot His covenant, He remembered it. Even in the land of their captivity He softened the hearts of their captors. P.

At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favor to them (vs. 44-46). They were chastened for their sins but not destroyed, *cast down* but not *cast off*; God appeared for them; looked upon their grievances, *regarded their affliction, beheld when distress was upon them, remembered for them His covenant*, and made good every word that He had spoken; and, therefore, bad as they were, He would not break with them, because He would not break His own promise. *He made them to be pitied even of those that carried them captives*, and had

ruled them with rigor. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies' wrath that it should not utterly consume them, but He infused compassion even into their stony hearts, and made them relent. God can change lions into lambs, and *when a man's ways please the Lord will make even his enemies to pity him and be at peace with him.* When God pities, men shall. *A God at peace with us makes everything else at peace.* H.

47. The moral force of the whole Psalm culminates in this closing prayer. We have sinned with our fathers; we have been a sinning nation all along the ages of our national history; let us repent deeply and most humbly before the God of our national covenant, and beseech Him to gather us to our fatherland again, to give thanks to His name and to triumph in His praise. C.

48. *Blessed (be) Jehovah, God of Israel, from eternity even to eternity. And all the people says Amen. Hallelujah!* Some interpreters regard the Psalm as closing with the preceding verse, and the one before us as a doxology added to mark the conclusion of the Fourth Book. But here, as in Psalm 72: 19, it is far more probable that this doxology was the occasion of the Psalm's being reckoned as the last of a book, notwithstanding its intimate connection with the one that follows. This probability is strengthened, in the case before us, by the addition of the words, *and all the people says Amen*, which would be unmeaning, unless the doxology formed part of the Psalm itself. A.

Amen. The literal signification, "So be it," is known to all; yet few consider the deep meaning, the great solemnity, and the abundant consolation treasured up in this word, which has formed for centuries the conclusion of the prayers and praises of God's people. A word which is frequently used without due thoughtfulness and unaccompanied with the feeling which it is intended to call forth, loses its power from this very familiarity, and though constantly on our lips, lies bedridden in the dormitory of our soul. But it is a great word this word "*Amen;*" and Luther has truly said, "*As your Amen is, so has been your prayer.*" A. Saphir.

FIFTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

PSALMS CVII.—CL.

PSALM CVII.

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| <p>1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD ; for he is good :
For his mercy <i>endureth</i> for ever.</p> <p>2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say <i>so</i>,
Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of
the adversary ;</p> <p>3 And gathered them out of the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.</p> <p>4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desert
way ;
They found no city of habitation.</p> <p>5 Hungry and thirsty,
Their soul fainted in them.</p> <p>6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their
trouble,
And he delivered them out of their distresses.</p> <p>7 He led them also by a straight way,
That they might go to a city of habitation.</p> <p>8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his
goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children
of men !</p> <p>9 For he satisfieth the longing soul,
And the hungry soul he filleth with good.</p> <p>10 Such as sat in darkness and in the shadow of
death,
Being bound in affliction and iron ;</p> <p>11 Because they rebelled against the words of
God,
And contemned the counsel of the Most
High :</p> <p>12 Therefore he brought down their heart with
labour ;
They fell down, and there was none to help.</p> <p>13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their
trouble,</p> | <p>And he saved them out of their distresses.</p> <p>14 He brought them out of darkness and the
shadow of death,
And brake their bands in sunder.</p> <p>15 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his
goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children
of men !</p> <p>16 For he hath broken the gates of brass,
And cut the bars of iron in sunder.</p> <p>17 Fools because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, are afflicted.</p> <p>18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat ;
And they draw near unto the gates of death.</p> <p>19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trou-
ble,
And he saveth them out of their distresses,</p> <p>20 He sendeth his word, and healeth them,
And delivereth <i>them</i> from their destructions.</p> <p>21 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his
goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children
of men !</p> <p>22 And let them offer the sacrifices of thanks-
giving,
And declare his works with singing.</p> <p>23 They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters ;</p> <p>24 These see the works of the LORD,
And his wonders in the deep.</p> <p>25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy
wind,
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.</p> <p>26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down
again to the depths :
Their soul melteth away because of trouble.</p> |
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- 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.
- 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.
- 29 He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
- 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet ;
So he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.
- 31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children of men !
- 32 Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people,
And praise him in the seat of the elders.
- 33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness,
And watersprings into a thirsty ground ;
- 34 A fruitful land into a salt desert,
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
- 35 He turneth a wilderness into a pool of water,
And a dry land into watersprings.
- 36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,
That they may prepare a city of habitation ;
- 37 And sow fields, and plant vineyards,
And get them fruits of increase.
- 38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly ;
And he suffereth not their cattle to decrease.
- 39 Again, they are minished and bowed down
Through oppression, trouble, and sorrow.
- 40 He poureth contempt upon princes,
And cause h them to wander in the waste,
where there is no way.
- 41 Yet setteth he the needy on high from affliction,
And maketh *him* families like a flock.
- 42 The upright shall see it, and be glad ;
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
- 43 Whoso is wise shall give heed to these things,
And they shall consider the mercies of the LORD.

WE have now arrived at the last collection of Psalms, which includes some older Psalms along with a few composed in or after the captivity of seventy years. This is a Psalm of providence, celebrating the kindness of the Lord to those wandering in the wilderness, in nine verses ; to those sitting in darkness and captivity, in seven verses ; to those in affliction and sickness, in six verses ; to those in a storm at sea, in ten verses, and to those who turn with penitence to the Lord under any corrective visitation, in eleven verses. Four parts are cases of difficulty or trouble in which men are wont to cry unto the Lord, and being delivered are exhorted to give thanks. The crying and the exhortation recur in each of these parts. The wanderer and the prisoner form a contrast ; the latter has no liberty, the former no resting-place. The bedridden and the tempest-tossed present a similar contrast. The four are the most striking forms of the perils of life. M.

This Psalm describes various incidents of human life ; it tells of the perils which befall men and the goodness of God in delivering them, and calls upon all who have experienced His care and protection gratefully to acknowledge them ; and it is perfectly general in its character. The four or five groups, or pictures, are so many samples taken from the broad and varied record of human experience. There can be no doubt as to the great lesson which the Psalm inculcates. It teaches us not only that God's

providence watches over men, but that His ear is open to their prayers. It teaches us that prayer may be put up for temporal deliverance, and that such prayer is answered. It teaches us that it is right to acknowledge with thanksgiving such answers to our petitions. This was the simple faith of the Hebrew poet. It is needless to say how readily such a faith is shaken now. First, there is the old and obvious objection that *all* such prayers, even when offered by men of devout mind, are *not* answered. To this it may be replied, that answers to prayer are not all of one kind ; and that God as really answers His children's supplication when He gives them strength and resignation in prison or in sickness, as when He "breaks in pieces the bars of iron," or "sends His Word and heals them ;" when He suffers them to sink beneath the raging waters, with heaven open to their eyes, as when He "brings them to their desired haven." Closely akin to this there arises another question. Does God ever answer prayer by *direct* action upon the material world ? It may be replied that it is not for the most part by immediate action in the material world that God grants our petitions. Even if we were forced to concede that now, since the age of miracles is past, God *never* so acts, still, this should not trouble us, seeing how wide the region is in which *indirectly* our prayers even for temporal blessing may be answered. How often we speak of happy inspirations, little knowing what we

mean when we speak thus ! And how unable we are to trace the chain ! We cannot see God's Spirit prompting the prayer or suggesting the remedy which shall be the answer to the prayer. But the antecedent and the consequent are as really there ; the links of the chain are as essential as they are in any of the phenomena of the material world which present themselves to our bodily senses. And thus the answer comes, not by direct interference with the laws of nature, but in accordance with the laws of the spiritual world—by the Divine action on the heart of man. If so, then the answer may be acknowledged with devout thanksgiving, and men may praise the Lord for His goodness.

The Psalm consists of six groups, with a preface (vs. 1-3) and a conclusion (v. 43). The preface and the conclusion alike give the theme or keynote of the Psalm. The first four groups are marked by the double refrain ; the two last have but a slight connection with the others. P.

2-7. The people of God are "*redeemed*," redeemed from the curse of the law, the powers of darkness, and the bondage of corruption. They are "*gathered*," gathered by His grace out of all the diversities of the human race ; "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." Whatever this world is to others, they find it to be "a wilderness," when they are often tried ; but their trials urge them to prayer, and prayer brings them relief. And being divinely *conducted*, they at length reach their destination ; and this is the conclusion of the whole, and it applies to each of them : "*And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*" Jay.

4. The first example : The caravan which has lost its way in the desert. They wandered. The subject of the verb may be "men" generally. The incident described was doubtless not uncommon. The usual track of the caravan is lost, obliterated, perhaps, by the sand-storm.

6. Then they cried. So it ever is ; only the pressure of a great need forces men to seek God. Prayer is not only the resource of good men, but of all men in trouble. P.

7. God for us, God with us, God in us, these are the ideas which describe our religion. For they explain its motive, they declare its meaning, they define its doctrine. The motive is, that God being for us, all things shall work together for our good, if we are for Him. The meaning is, that God being with us, His providence is ever ready to lead us on *by the right way*. The doctrine is, that an indwelling God is our salvation. Thorold. — God's way,

though to us it seems about, will appear, at last, to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world ; we are here as in a wilderness, have here *no continuing city*, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims ; but we are under the guidance of His wise and good providence, committing ourselves to which we shall be *led in the right way to the city that has foundations*. H.

A heart that waits and watches for God's direction, that uses common sense as well as faith to unravel small and great perplexities, and is willing to sit loose to the present, however pleasant, in order that it may not miss the indications which say, "*Arise ! this is not your rest*," fulfils the conditions on which, if we keep them, we may be sure that He will guide us by the right way, and bring us at last to the city of habitation. A. M.

4-7. The children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt, instead of entering into the Holy Land, passed through the wilderness. There were many intricacies, many privations, and "but for the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night," they would have lost their way. Thus it is with the children of God. There are great intricacies in the journey of life, and many privations, but they have a constant communication of Divine wisdom to guide them, if they supplicate for it. If left to ourselves we should fall by the right hand and by the left ; but He has promised to guide us by His counsel, and to lead us by the way we should go. "The Lord God is ■ sun and shield, He will give grace and glory ;" He will supply wisdom for direction in answer to prayer. Although the spiritual Israel have not a miraculous direction, they have a real one ; it is the path of duty, the path of safety, and of happiness. The Israelites were fed with manna, by a Divine and supernatural production ; thus the people of God are conducted through the world ; they have many natural and spiritual enemies to combat, and many privations to endure, yet they are sustained, in a supernatural manner, by the Word of God and by the Spirit. They are nourished by the Word and ordinances, and sustained by the Spirit. R. Hall.

12. *They fell down, and there was none to help.* Affliction is then come to the height and its complete measure, when the sinner is made sensible of his own weakness, and doth see there is no help for him save in God alone. Dickson.—They could not help themselves, nor was there any creature that could. There is salvation in no other than in Christ ; when He saw there was none to help Him in that

work, His own arm brought salvation to him ; and when sinners see there is help in no other, they apply to Him. *Gill.*

13. *Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble.* Not a prayer till then. While there was any to help below they would not look above. No cries till their hearts were brought down and their hopes were all dead ; *then* they cried, but not before. So many a man offers what he calls prayer when he is in good case and thinks well of himself, but in very deed the only real cry to God is that which is forced out of him by a sense of utter helplessness and misery. S.

17-22. Third example : sick persons brought by their sickness to the edge of the grave. P. — Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us ; and of that the Psalmist speaks in these verses. H.

17. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* Many sicknesses are the direct result of foolish acts. Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate results of wickedness ; men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains. Worse still, even when they are in affliction they are fools still ; and while under the rod they add sin to sin. S.

19. Then is a proper time for prayer ; *Then they cry unto the Lord.* Is any sick ? Let him pray ; let him be prayed for ; prayer is a salve for every sore. H. — In all the changes of this mortal life the Psalmist sees no real chance, no real change, but the orderly education of a just and loving Father whose mercy endureth forever, who chastens men as a father chastens his children, for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holiness, in which alone are life and joy, health and wealth. He sees that God is our Father, that God is educating us, that God hath neither parts nor passions, and that therefore God's wrath is not different or contrary to His love, but that God's wrath is His love in another shape, punishing men just because He loves men. *Kingsley.*

20. *He sent His Word and healed them.* This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when He was upon earth, by a word's speaking ; He said, *Be clean, Be whole,* and the work was done ; it may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration ; He sends His Word and heals souls ; convinces, converts, sanctifies them, and all by the Word. H.

23-32. Fourth example : Seafarers tossed

and driven by the tempest and brought at last safe into port. It is the most highly finished, the most thoroughly poetical of each of the four pictures of human peril and deliverance. It is painted as a landsman would paint it, but yet only as one who had himself been in "perils of waters" could paint the storm, the waves running mountains high, on which the tiny craft seemed a plaything, the helplessness of human skill, the gladness of the calm, the safe refuge in the haven. Addison remarks that he prefers this description of a ship in a storm before any others he had ever met with, and for the same reason for which "Longinus recommends one in Homer, because the poet has not amused himself with little fancies upon the occasion, as authors of an inferior genius, whom he mentions, had done, but because he has gathered together those circumstances which are the most apt to terrify the imagination, and which really happened in the raging of a tempest." By the way, he adds, "How much more comfortable as well as rational is this system of the Psalmist, than the pagan scheme in Virgil and other poets where one deity is represented as raising a storm, and another as laying it ! Were we only to consider the sublime in this piece of poetry, what can be nobler than the idea it gives us of the Supreme Being thus raising a tumult among the elements, and recovering them out of their confusion, thus troubling and becalming nature ?" P.

No language can be more sublime than the description of a storm at sea in this Psalm. It is the very soul of poetry. The utmost simplicity of diction is employed to convey the grandest thoughts. The picture is not crowded ; none but the most striking circumstances are selected ; and everything is natural, simple, and beyond measure interesting. The whole is an august representation of the providence of God, ruling in what appears the most ungovernable province of nature. It is God who raises the storm ; it is God who stilleth it. The wise men of this world may look no farther than the physical laws by which God acts ; but the Holy Spirit, by the Psalmist, views the awful conflict of the elements as the work of God. *Carson.*

The liquid acres of the deep, tossing themselves evermore to the winds and rolling their mighty anthem round the world, are among the most valuable and productive acres God has made. Great emotions and devout affections are better fruits than corn, more precious luxuries than wine or oil. And God has built the world with a visible aim to exercise His creatures with whatever is lofty in conception,

holy in feeling, and filial in purpose toward Himself. All the trials and storms of the land have this same object. To make the soul great, He gives us great dangers to meet, great obstacles to conquer. Deserts, famines, pestilences, regions of cold and wintry snow, hail and tempest, none of these are elements of waste and destruction, because they go to fructify the moral man. As related to the kingdom of God, they are engines of truth, purity, strength, and all that is great and holy in character. The sea is a productive element of the same class. How many here have bowed who never bowed before to the tremendous sovereignty of God? How many prayers have gone up to fill the sky and circle the world, from wives and mothers, exploring His protecting presence with husbands and sons they have trusted to the deep? H. B.

28-30. All this is true of our individual lives, as well as of the history of the Church. Storms will come, and He may seem to be heedless. He is ever awakened by our cry, which needs not to be pure faith to bring the answer, but may be strangely intertwined of faith and fear. "The Lord will help, . . . and that right early;" and the peace that He brings is peace indeed. So it may be with us amid the struggles of life. So may it be with us when "the voyage on this storm-tossed sea of time is done!" "They cry unto the Lord in their trouble. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven." A. M.

By storms and by favorable breezes, through tempest and fair weather, the great Pilot and Ruler of the sea brings mariners to port and His people to heaven. We should long ago have been wrecked if it had not been for His preserving hand, and our only hope of outliving the storms of the future is based upon His wisdom, faithfulness, and power. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore. S.

There is in the Bible no recognition of the difficulties raised by philosophy respecting prayer. On this point the instinct of the race has been manifested unequivocally. Universally, or nearly so, when, as the Psalmist says, men "draw near unto the gates of death," when "they that go down to the sea in ships" "mount up to the heaven," and "go down again to the depths," "and are at their wits' end," "then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Not only speculative questioners of the efficacy of prayer, but professed atheists have often been brought to extremities in

which this instinct has so asserted itself that they have cried unto God. Not only from the Bible, but from the analogy of our earthly life, from our whole nature as practical, and from its necessary relation to our highest wants, we infer the efficacy of asking. M. H.—Providence is the natural and necessary development of the existence of God; it is the constant presence and permanent action of God in creation. The universal and undying instinct which impels man to prayer is in harmony with this ultimate fact; he who believes in God cannot but have recourse to Him in prayer. *Guizot.*

In times of action and of peril, the daily experience of the Christian effectively teaches him (far more effectively than can be done by abstract explanations) that the Divine providence and the spiritual economy, which are the objects of his faith, do not in any wise interfere with the ordinary course of events; in other words, that the latter is not broken in upon or disturbed by the former. With this evidence of experience constantly pressed upon him his faith ascends into its proper sphere; while he confidently reposes upon the Divine declaration, "That all things shall work together for good to those who love God." I. T.—Providential and natural law is a discipline for us—our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; our teacher, introducing us to spiritual wisdom, and to God, the Fountain, the Inspirer, and the Executor of all Law. The lessons of providential and natural law throw us directly upon God, and powerfully teach us the importance and blessedness of a daily recognition of the Divine providence in all things. They are happy and secure, and they alone, who have learned to say, *If the Lord will. Cheever.*

33-42. The Psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives Him the glory of the revolutions of Providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men. H.—The character of the Psalm changes at this point. Instead of fresh examples of deliverance from peril, and thanksgiving for God's mercies, we have now instances of God's providential government of the world exhibited in two series of contrasts. The first of these is contained in vs. 33-39, and expresses a double change, the fruitful, well-watered land smitten, like the rich plain of Sodom, with desolation, and changed into a salt-marsh; and anon, the wilderness crowned with cities, like Tadmor, and made fertile to produce corn and wine; the second is contained in vs. 40, 41, and expresses the changes in the fortunes of *men* (as

the last series did those of *countries*), viz., how the poor and the humble are raised and the rich and the proud overthrown. P.

33-39. The central idea here is that God has such absolute control over the realm of nature that He can utterly reverse its course, and so reverse the circumstances of our lot: changing rivers to dryness; the fruitful land to barrenness; or, again, the drought to copious waterings, and the barren soil to exuberant fertility. All is in His hand. C.

37. *And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.* Men work when God works. His blessing encourages the sower, cheers the planter, and rewards the laborer. Divine visitations bring great spiritual riches, foster varied works of faith and labors of love, and cause every good fruit to abound to our comfort and to God's praise. When God sends the blessing it does not supersede, but encourages and develops human exertion. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase.

39. *Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.* As they change in character, so do their circumstances alter. Under the old dispensation this was very clearly to be observed; Israel's ups and downs were the direct consequences of her sins and repentances. Trials are of various kinds: here we have three words for affliction, and there are numbers more; God has many rods and we have many smarts, and all because we have many sins. S.

40, 41. So, also, high station and great power, as men count things great, cannot save the wicked from His judgments. He can lay princes low, and exalt the poor to a state of manifold blessings. C.

41. *He setteth the poor on high from affliction.* High above the reach of the curse, which shall never touch him; above the power of Satan, which shall never ruin him; above the reigning influence of sin, which "shall not have dominion over him;" above the possibility of being banished from His presence, for "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." This is the way God sets His people on high, instructing them in the mysteries of His Word, and giving them to partake the joys that are contained therein. J. Irons.

— Such surprising turns as these are of use: For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure; *The righteous shall see it, and rejoice* in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifesting of His dominion over the children of men. For the silencing of sin-

ners; *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*; it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the Divine providence; and forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect *stop the mouth of all iniquity.* H.

43. The remarkable appearances of Divine providence to persons in distress; the various changes and vicissitudes in the world; the several afflictions of God's people, and their deliverances out of them; the wonderful works of God in nature, providence, and grace—these will be taken notice of, laid up in the mind, and kept by such who are truly wise, who know how to make a right use and proper improvement of them. "*Even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD*;" every one of the wise men; they will perceive the kindness of God unto men, in the several dispensations of His providence toward them, and His special love and kindness toward His own people; even in all their afflictions they will perceive this to be at the bottom of every mercy and blessing; they will understand more of the nature and excellency of it, and know more of the love of God and Christ which passeth knowledge. Gill.

These mighty doings of our God in delivering His feeble creatures from the trackless wilderness of error; from the noisome chain of carnal lust; from the deadly sickness of a corrupt nature, and from the wild tempest of earthly passion, deserve the thoughtful joy of all who would be faithful servants of their Lord. The mouth of unbelief and the excuses of iniquity are stopped by the sight of the marvels of that mercy which endureth forever. The truly wise will ponder these things, for in the knowledge of them is true wisdom; and so pondering, there shall open before them, ever plainer, fuller, clearer, brighter, the revelation of that mighty love of their Eternal Father which surpasses all understanding, and is vaster than all thought. Plain Commentary.

How great a volume might be written concerning the observable things of Divine providence. I can never look upon it, I can never take the motions of it into my thoughts, but some new observation tendereth itself into my thoughts, I must turn my eyes from this wonderful work, for I see they will not be satisfied with seeing, my mind will never be filled with observation. When we speak of the love and favor of God to His people, we are prone to understand by it nothing but pleasing providences, grateful to our senses; now the "*loving-kindness*" of God is not only seen in pleasing dispensations, but in adverse providences also;

"Whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom He receiveth;" "all things are yours," saith the apostle. This knowledge must be gained by *observation*. *John Collinges*.

Every follower of Christ may believe that he is never more reasonably engaged than when he is casting himself on the Divine providence. Instead of shuddering in chilly doubt as to particular providence, be assured you cannot conceive of a providence more particular than that which is. Superstition may take that for providence which is only its own morbid fancy. Presumption may rely on Providence, in idle, insolent neglect of means. But true faith will still cling to the belief that the sparrow's fall is not too particular for God's plan. It is our privilege, not only to hope in Providence with regard to the lesser affairs of life, but to recognize it—to see God's hand in our daily walk, with wonder and love. "They that observe providences, shall have providences to observe." J. W. A.

The design of this instructive Psalm is to impress the fact of God's universal providence. The cases referred to are general illustrations of God's acting in relation to every form of trial and peril, and are followed by explicit general declarations of His agency in the increase or barrenness of fields and vineyards, and in the affairs of rich and poor; the whole distinctly intimating that His providence extends equally to every estate and produces every event. There is evidence in this Psalm also that, although God acts thus minutely and universally, yet so far as His providence affects man's moral actions it is not ordinarily irrespective of these actions. It is an ennobling as well as a grateful and warning truth that His conduct toward man is, in measure, directed and determined by man's conduct toward Him. This truth is seen in the fact that in response to the cry of the wandering and famished, the helpless and hopeless, the Lord relieves and delivers them. It is here unqualifiedly shown that God's providential dealings are to a certain extent influenced by man's conduct, especially by active, prayerful confidence in Him. And this plainly revealed fact removes much of the difficulty pertaining to His providences. It takes away *entirely* from His doings the character of arbitrariness, while it sustains and grandly illustrates His sovereignty and benevolence. Thus the whole Psalm inculcates, explains, and commends the doctrine of God's minute and universal providence. B.

It is certainly by general laws that the providence of God directs the course of the world.

It would be more correct to give these general laws another name. They are the permanent will of God, continuously acting on the world; for the Legislator, like His laws, is always present in the world. But when God created man He made him not like the material world, but a free moral agent; and hence is necessitated a radical difference in the kind of agency which He exerts upon man and upon the material world. The freedom of man, his free determinations in his moral acts, being admitted, it will not do to say that God governs man, altogether by general and permanent laws; for that would be to ignore and abolish liberty as a part of man's life; *i.e.*, to ignore and mutilate the work of God. Man determines freely, and so effectuates, in his own proper life, events which are not the result of general laws exterior to himself. Divine providence takes cognizance of human liberty. It does not manage men as it does the stars of heaven and the waves of the ocean, which neither think nor will. It has different relations with man and with nature, and a different mode of acting upon them. How is it in the human family? The father and the mother while managing the child recognize his active development. They watch over him with authority and with tenderness. Without destroying his liberty they give that liberty rules and limits. They hear his prayers, sometimes grant, and at others refuse, them, just as reason dictates, and in view of his general and future interest. The child, on his part, without premeditation or design, but by the spontaneous instinct of his nature, recognizes the authority and feels the tenderness of his parents. In the course of his development he obeys and resists them in turn, using his natural liberty well or ill; but, through all these troubles of the will, he asks and prays with confidence, joyful and grateful when he receives from them, and ready to ask and beg again when he has been refused, and always with confidence. Such are the facts in the natural and good government of the family. And they are the imperfect but true image, the obscure and yet faithful shadowing forth of Divine providence. The Christian doctrine of providence presents and describes the action of God on the life of man qualified in just this way. It represents God as always present and accessible to men, as the father is to the child. It exhorts, encourages, invites men to pray to God and trust in Him. It reserves to God absolutely the answer to prayer. He bestows or denies. We may not see into His reasons, for "God's ways are not our ways." But yet with prayer "without ceasing" the Christian doctrine

always connects *hope*; for "nothing is impossible with God." The Christian doctrine of providence is in full and intimate harmony with the nature of man. In recognizing his liberty it does homage to his greatness; in giving to him access to God in prayer it provides for his weakness. As a question of science, it leaves the mystery as one incapable of solution; but in actual life and experience it resolves the problem of natural religion which burdens the soul. *Gutzot.*

Nothing is or can be properly accidental to God; but accidents are so called in respect of the intention or expectation of second causes, when things fall out beside their knowledge or design. And there is nothing in which Providence so much triumphs over the profoundest wisdom of men as in the stable, certain knowledge and disposal of all casual events, in respect of which the clearest mortal intellect is wholly in the dark. And upon this account, as loose as these events seem to hang upon one another, yet they are all knit and linked together in a firm chain, and the highest link of that chain is held and managed by an unerring Providence; the chain, indeed, may wave and shake this way and that way, but still the hand that holds it is steady, and the eye that guides it infallible. *South.*—In all Divine works the smallest beginnings lead assuredly to some result; and the remark in spiritual matters, that "the kingdom of God cometh without observation," is also found to be true in every work of Divine providence; so that everything glides quietly on without confusion or noise, and the matter is achieved before men either think or perceive that it is commenced. *Bacon.*

Devout attention to the dealings of Providence is equally consonant to the dictates of reason and of Scripture. He who believes in the superintendence of an Eternal Mind over the affairs of the universe is both irrational and indevout in neglecting to make the course of events the subject of frequent meditation; since the knowledge of God is incomparably more important than the most intimate acquaintance with our fellow-creatures; and as the latter is chiefly acquired by an attentive observation of their conduct, so must the former be obtained in the same way. The operations of providence are marked with a character as expressive of their great Author as the productions of human agency; and the same Being who speaks like Himself in His Word, acts like Himself in the moral economy of the universe. To us who have access to both these sources of information they serve to illustrate each other; the obscuri-

ties of providence are elucidated by Scripture; the declarations of Scripture are verified by providence. One unfolds, as far as it is suitable to our state, the character and designs of the mysterious agent; the other displays His works; and the admirable harmony which is found to subsist between them strengthens and invigorates our confidence in both. *R. Hall.*

God is the Lord of Hosts; He is the great commander of heaven and earth; He it is that directs the conflicts, neither are any put to try mastery, no field pitched, no battle fought, but by His special order and commission, and all for the accomplishment of His glory. But men which behold the state of the world with eyes dim by reason of the weakness of their judgments and affections, think all things are out of order, that there is nothing but confusion and disorder; that the worse men are the better they fare; and they fare the worse the better they are. But if they did but once ascend into the sanctuary of God and judge of occurrences by heavenly principles, then they would confess that no army on earth can be better marshalled than the great army of all the creatures of heaven and earth; and that, notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary, all is well and will end well; that God who is the God of order will bring light out of darkness and order out of the greatest confusion, could they have but patience and let Him alone with His own work. *Spencer.*

The world is not a vessel which is suffered to drift about, without a pilot, mast, or sail; but one in which an Almighty hand guides the helm. The human race is not an unbridled, ungoverned mass, but an immense flock, fed by an all-satisfying Shepherd. History is not a web of human will and blind chaos, but a work of art, for which He who orders all things twists the thread of all human doings and undertakings. And if it does not everywhere manifest itself as such a work of art, we must bear in mind that it is still only a fragment, and that our eyes are obscured with regard to the ways of God. Wait till the Lord Almighty reaches the end of His great designs, and till eternity removes every veil, and sharpens the eye and the understanding. Oh, how shall we then sink down in adoring astonishment before the feet of the Eternal, when we perceive how everything, even that which was the most opposed and inimical to His holy will, was obliged to submit, become subservient to and even promote under His all-powerful hand the exalted plans of His rule and government! *Krummacher.*

God, as the God of providence, is also the God

of grace ; He is the God of grace in order that His providence may be the blessedness of His creatures, and he is the God of providence in order that His grace may be put in their power, may be made available by them, may be applied to them, may be used by them for eternal life. For the accomplishment of the purposes of His grace all His providential laws in this world are constituted and carried into operation. All arrangements are made for this result, with reference to the plan of redemption. All the vast and almost confounding lines and cycles of events, eras, and experiments, apparently contradictory and entangled, the mighty movements of Divine providence that seem crossing and conflicting, have one and the same purpose and end, God's glory in Christ Jesus. *Cheever.*

You can open your Bibles ; learn to open the volumes of creatures and providences, to read there also of God and glory. Thus we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every common meal than most men have in a sacrament. If thou prosper in the world, let it make thee more sensible of thy perpetual prosperity. If thou art weary with labor, let it make the thoughts of thy eternal rest more sweet. If things go cross, let thy desires be more earnest to have sorrows and sufferings forever cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or sleep ? Remember the inconceivable refreshment with Christ. Dost thou hear the raging noise of the wicked and the confusion of the world ? Think of the blessed harmony in heaven. Thus every condition and creature affords us advantages for a heavenly life, if we had but hearts to improve it. *Baxter.*

God has been and is working in this world to regenerate, purify, cement, and build up human character. All the world is His storehouse, all time and all events His instruments. He works through all things, and in all His true friends,

to secure their real, eternal good. The office of faith is to take God at His word ; it is with love in our hearts to go out calmly into the future so dark to us, believing that God is our Guardian, and that in ways to us unknown the darkest calamities of life will conspire with its brightest scenes to do us good. *J. Drummond.*—It should be enough to reconcile us to every event, that it befalls us agreeably to the wisdom and justice and mercy of God. What misery, what weakness, what consumption of health, what decay of spirits, what paralysis of effort, what sourness and morose care might have been avoided if we had learned to live in a continual submission to Providence as to every particular of our lives. *J. W. A.*

Man has been placed in this world in the midst of concentric circles of Divine attributes, which become charged with deeper interest as they press in closer toward him. The most distant is power, girdling the universe with its rings of stars and constellations. Within it comes the sphere of harmonious wisdom in the orbits of the planets and the revolutions of sun and moon, with signs and seasons. When we touch our own world we can discern goodness in the varied tribes of being in earth, and air, and sea. Justice enters in the field of human history, inspiring confidence, and yet exciting awe when it shows us the rise or the ruin of nations, as they abide by, or depart from, the principles of rectitude. But the inmost circle of fatherly love and forgiving mercy remains in the approach of God to the individual soul. Such a circle there must be, and when we feel its clasp on our hearts we learn, in the language of the poet, "that the world is made for each of us." The universe gathers round each single eye like a broad rainbow arch, to let us see, not the world alone, but God, power the outmost color, mercy the nearest, that every one may be able to look up to Him without dismay. *Ker.*

PSALM CVIII.

A SONG, A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 My heart is fixed, O God ;
 I will sing, yea, I will sing praises, even
 with my glory.</p> <p>2 Awake, psaltery and harp :
 I myself will awake right early.</p> <p>3 I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among
 the peoples :
 And I will sing praises unto thee among the
 nations.</p> <p>4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens,
 And thy truth <i>reacheth</i> unto the skies.</p> <p>5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens :
 And thy glory above all the earth.</p> <p>6 That thy beloved may be delivered,
 Save with thy right hand, and answer us.</p> <p>7 God hath spoken in his holiness ; I will ex-
 ult :</p> | <p>I will divide Shechem, and mete out the val-
 ley of Succoth.</p> <p>8 Gilead is mine ; Manasseh is mine ;
 Ephraim also is the defence of mine head ;
 Judah is my sceptre.</p> <p>9 Moab is my washpot ;
 Upon Edom will I cast my shoe :
 Over Philistia will I shout.</p> <p>10 Who will bring me into the fenced city ?
 Who hath led me unto Edom ?</p> <p>11 Hast not thou cast us off, O God ?
 And thou goest not forth, O God, with our
 hosts.</p> <p>12 Give us help against the adversary :
 For vain is the help of man.</p> <p>13 Through God we shall do valiantly :
 For he it is that shall tread down our adver-
 saries.</p> |
|---|---|

THIS Psalm consists of portions of two others ; the first half of it being taken from the fifty-seventh Psalm, vs. 7-11, and the latter half from the sixtieth, vs. 5-12. There are a few not very important variations of the text. For the interpretation at large, the notes on the other two Psalms may be consulted. P.—The best solution which has been proposed is that David himself combined these passages to be the basis of a trilogy (Psalms 108-110), adapted to the use of the Church at a period posterior to the date of Psalms 57 and 60. A.

1-5. (Taken from Psalm 57 : 7-11.) With the Hebrew poets there is not merely the potent enunciation of moral truth which comes home to the conscience, not merely the aggregation of noble images borrowed from the treasury of external nature, but more than all this, the revelation of a new and spiritual world, which owes nothing for its beauty to the fairest images of this material universe, and which, in fact, is as far above it as the heavens are above the earth. This is really the exclusive glory of the Old Testament poets, who stand alone in their knowledge of God, their dependence on God, and their trust in God. Take these verses as an instance. Here is the revelation of the nature of a Being who can inspire the heart with the liveli-

est gratitude, to whom the devotion of all the powers is an inadequate offering, who has inspired the mind of the speaker with a sense of unmerited mercy that is as glorious as it is omnipotent, and whose majesty is only equalled by His truth. But without postulating the existence of this Being it is not possible to deduce His existence from the contemplation of nature ; and yet, if that existence is a fact, of what infinite insignificance are all other facts and existences compared with it ? If the world of the invisible is a reality, and man's relation to it real, as depicted in the Psalms, what a field is opened out for the poetic imagination, and how far more glorious must be its beauties than the fairest and loveliest of the images of earth ! *Leathes.*

1. My glory. *My soul*, with all the faculties and powers which belong to the rational being, as created in the image of God. P.—As the glory of man above the brute creatures is that from a reasonable mind he can express what is his will by his tongue, so the glory of saints above other men is to have a tongue directed by the heart for expressing of God's praise : “ *I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.* ” *Dickson.*

4, 5. The greatness of the attributes “ *mercy and truth* ” we have in v. 4 ; and there is an an-

swerable greatness in his praises of God for them, v. 5: "*Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and Thy glory above all the earth.*" He wisheth and endeavoreth to exalt Him as high in his praises as He is in Himself; to exalt Him above the earth, above the heaven and the clouds. *H. Jeanes.*

4. The discoveries of astronomy have added no attribute to the Divine Being. They have simply rendered the *feeling* of His greatness more vivid. From the earliest times pious men have believed in the existence of multitudes of intelligent beings who are superior to man, of "the army of heaven" as well as "the inhabitants of earth." Nowhere is the Divine power set forth with deeper fervor than in the Psalms. But the moment that you grasp the idea of an Infinite Being all His works seem to be nothing in the presence of their Creator. The great and the small are alike atoms in His sight, the one not more than the other entitled to His notice. When the telescope unveiled a universe above us, so vast as to overpower the imagination, the microscope, at the same time, was uncovering a universe beneath us, finished in every part and not less full of wonders. The natural attributes of the Creator, moreover, are never to be allowed to veil from sight His moral perfections. "His mercy," like His power, "is great above the heavens." His condescension is equal to His might. Therefore He is said to crown man with His loving-kindness. *G. P. Fisher.*

6-13. *Taken from Psalm 60 : 5-12.*

9. *Over Edom will I cast my shoe.* David overthrew their army in the "Valley of Salt," and his general, Joab, following up the victory,

destroyed nearly the whole male population, and placed Jewish garrisons in all the strongholds of Edom. *J. L. Porter.*

10, 11. It is not conclusive evidence that we are not called to undertake a given work or perform a certain duty, because it is very difficult or even impossible for us to succeed without special help from God. If God calls David to take Petra, he shall take Petra. *Plumer.*—His hand shall lead him even to Petra, which seems unapproachable by human strength. That marvellous rock-city of the Edomites is surrounded by rocks some of which are three hundred feet high, and a single path twelve feet in width leads to it. The city itself is partly hewn out of the cloven rocks, and its ruins, which, however, belong to a later period, fill travellers with amazement. *Tholuck.*

12. *Give us help from trouble : for vain is the help of man.* This prayer has often fallen from the lips of men who have been bitterly disappointed by their fellows, and it has also been poured out unto the Lord in the presence of some gigantic labor in which mortal power is evidently of no avail. Edom cannot be entered by any human power, yet from its fastnesses the robber bands come rushing down; therefore, O Lord, do Thou interpose and give Thy people deliverance. We ought to pray with all the more confidence in God when our confidence in man is altogether gone.

13. God's help shall inspire us to help ourselves. Where praise and prayer have preceded the battle we may expect to see heroic deeds and decisive victories. "*Through God*" is our secret support; from that source we draw all our courage, wisdom, and strength. *S.*

PSALM CIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 HOLD not thy peace, O God of my praise;
2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth
of deceit have they opened against me:
They have spoken unto [or, *against*] me with
a lying tongue.
3 They compassed me about also with words
of hatred,
And fought against me without a cause
4 For my love they are my adversaries:

But I *give myself* unto prayer.
5 And they have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love.
6 Set thou a wicked man over him:
And let an adversary stand at his right hand.
7 When he is judged, let him come forth
guilty;
And let his prayer be turned into sin.

- 8 Let his days be few ;
And let another take his office.
- 9 Let his children be fatherless,
 And his wife a widow.
- 10 Let his children be vagabonds, and beg ;
 And let them seek *their bread* out of their
 desolate places.
- 11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath ;
 And let strangers make spoil of his labour.
- 12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him ;
 Neither let there be any to have pity on his
 fatherless children.
- 13 Let his posterity be cut off ;
 In the generation following let their name be
 blotted out.
- 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered
 with the LORD ;
 And let not the sin of his mother be blotted
 out.
- 15 Let them be before the LORD continually,
 That he may cut off the memory of them
 from the earth.
- 16 Because that he remembered not to show
 mercy,
 But persecuted the poor and needy man,
 And the broken in heart, to slay *them*.
- 17 Yea, he loved cursing, and it came unto him ;
 And he delighted not in blessing, and it was
 far from him.
- 18 He clothed himself also with cursing as with
 his garment,
 And it came into his inward parts like water,
 And like oil into his bones.
- 19 Let it be unto him as the raiment wherewith
 he covereth himself,
- And for the girdle wherewith he is girded
 continually.
- 20 This is the reward of mine adversaries from
 the LORD,
 And of them that speak evil against my soul.
- 21 But deal thou with me, O God the Lord, for
 thy name's sake :
 Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me,
- 22 For I am poor and needy,
 And my heart is wounded within me.
- 23 I am gone like the shadow when it de-
 clineth :
 I am tossed up and down as the locust.
- 24 My knees are weak through fasting ;
 And my flesh faileth of fatness.
- 25 I am become also a reproach unto them :
 When they see me, they shake their head.
- 26 Help me, O LORD my God ;
 O save me according to thy mercy :
- 27 That they may know that this is thy hand ;
 That thou, LORD, hast done it.
- 28 Let them curse, but bless thou :
 When they arise, they shall be ashamed, but
 thy servant shall rejoice.
- 29 Mine adversaries shall be clothed with dis-
 honour,
 And *they shall* cover themselves with their
 own shame as with a mantle.
- 30 I will give great thanks unto the LORD with
 my mouth ;
 Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.
- 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the
 needy,
 To save him from them that judge his soul.

THIS is the last of the Psalms of imprecation, and differs from the ninety-sixth in being levelled against one enemy chiefly, not against many. This circumstance may partly account for the even more intensely-wrought and detailed character of the curse. Who the person was who was thus singled out for execration it is in vain to conjecture. P.

This Psalm consists of three parts : A complaint of slanderous and malignant enemies (vs. 1-5) ; a prayer for the punishment of such (vs. 6-20), and a prayer for the sufferer's own deliverance, with a promise of thanksgiving (vs. 21-31). This Psalm is remarkable, first, as containing the most striking instances of what are called the imprecations of the Psalms ; and then, as having been applied in the most explicit manner to the sufferings of our Saviour from the treachery of Judas, and to the miserable fate of the latter. These two peculiarities

are perhaps more closely connected than they may at first sight seem. Perhaps the best solution of the first is that afforded by the second, or at least by the hypothesis that the Psalmist, under the direction of the Spirit, viewed the sufferings of Israel which furnished the occasion of the Psalm, as an historical type of the Messiah's sufferings from the treachery of Judas, and that with this view he expresses his abhorrence of the crime, and acquiesces in the justice of its punishment in stronger terms than would have been, or are elsewhere, employed in reference to ordinary criminals. A.

What is to hinder our acceptance of the fact that the Holy Ghost allowed the natural expression of a righteous indignation against the persistently ungodly to take this form of withering anathema in order to set forth by the fearful details that are given the dreadful doom of the ungodly ? Is it said that we could not, or at

least would not, use these terms in reference to any violent oppressor of Christians now? Certainly not, but why? Because we have no inspiration to direct us. But we can read these awful imprecations and study them with profit as indications of the vindictory justice of God. Nay, at times circumstances compel a hearty sympathy with them. Nothing less seems adequate to the occasion. An eminent Christian scholar who has spent his life in Syria told me that any man who lived among the Mohammedans would have no difficulty with the imprecatory Psalms. Dr. Duff said the same in regard to the Sepoy rebellion. Did not the same man who wrote the exquisite hymn to love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians conclude that epistle with the solemn words, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maranatha?" The one word *anathema* wraps up in it far more than all the imprecations to be found in the Psalter. *Chambers.*

4. In requital for my love to them, they play the part of Satan against me. The Hebrew for "my adversaries" is a verb, the same from which the word Satan is derived. The last clause is strikingly concise: "but I . . . prayer." As for me, my heart is all prayer. I cry to God for help constantly, to strengthen me against temptation and shield me from this hot and malign persecution. Christians have need, under such circumstances, to pray without ceasing that God would help them keep their heart right. C.—*I pray*, so it is in the original; "I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer and prize prayer, practise prayer and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer." A good man *gives himself to prayer*. H.

5. *They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.* Evil for good is devil-like. The revenge which pays a man back in his own coin has a kind of natural justice in it; but what shall be said of that baseness which returns to goodness the very opposite of what it has a right to expect? S.

6. Leaving the mass of his enemies, the Psalmist suddenly singles out one on whom he pours forth the terrible curse which follows. See a similar transition in chap. 55:12. Vs. 1-5 do not give the whole grounds for the curse; they are resumed in vs. 16-18. P.

6. *Set Thou a wicked man over him.* The first thing that the Psalmist asks is that his foe might be subjected to the evil of having a man placed over him like himself, a man regardless of justice, truth, and right. It is, in fact, a prayer that he might be punished *in the line of*

his offences. It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others; and it cannot be in itself wrong to desire that a man should be treated according to his character and deserts, for this is the object of all law, and this is what all magistrates and legislators are endeavoring to secure. *Barnes.*

An adversary; or, "Satan." Let him have not only an unrighteous judge, but a malicious accuser. P.—*Wicked one* and *adversary* (*Satan*), although here used as appellatives or common nouns, are the very terms applied, in the later Scriptures, to the evil spirit or the devil. See Job 1:6; 2:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; Zech. 3:1, 2. In the place last cited he stands too at the right hand of the sinner to accuse him. A.—The sentiment is: Let him who acts the part of Satan toward me know in his own case what it is to have a Satan at *his* right hand, over him, with the heart to hate and the power to harm. C.

7. *Let his prayer become sin.* Evidently his prayer that he might be acquitted and discharged. A prayer offered for a murderer or violator of the law, that he might escape or not be punished, would be wrong, or would be a "sin;" and so, in his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer *for his own escape* would be "sin." The Psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be *seen* to be in fact a prayer for the protection and escape of a *bad man*. A just sentence in the case would demonstrate this; and this is what the Psalmist prays for. *Barnes.*

8. *Let his days be few.* Who would desire a persecuting tyrant to live long? If he will do nothing but mischief the shortening of his life will be the lengthening of the world's tranquillity. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;" this is bare justice to them, and great mercy to the poor and needy. S.

Let another take his office. So every man acts and practically prays, who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. As such an office must be filled by some one, all the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked man tend to bring it about that "another should take his office," and for this it is *right* to labor and pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety. *Barnes.*

His office, implying that the person held a position of some importance. In Acts 1:20 the passage is applied to Judas. In this verse a

double loss is imprecated, the loss of life, "let his days be few," and the loss of honor, "let another take his office;" in v. 11 a third is added, the loss of property. P.

When, under the old covenant, earthly prosperity was the portion of the wicked, and earthly adversity of the pious, the whole moral government of God seemed to be veiled in clouds and darkness. The very fact that immortality was not clearly discovered to him made the pious Israelite long more passionately for the speedy shining forth of God's power and justice. We must interpret every book by the mind of the author. If so, we must apply this to the Bible and to the Psalms. Their real author is the Holy Spirit. It is remarkable that in the first chapter of the Acts the very strongest of these imprecations is applied as a prophecy to the betrayer of our Lord. *Bishop Alexander.*

10-13. These are very terrible petitions; but it is God, not man, who has appointed these calamities as the ordinary consequences of persistence in wickedness. It is God, not man, who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations. It is because this is the ordinary portion of the transgressors, and *that thus in God's wonted way His abhorrence of the transgressions* of His enemies might be marked, that the Psalmist prays for these calamities. He asks God to do what He had declared He would do, and this for public ends, for he says: "I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise Him *among the multitude*. For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul" (vs. 30, 31). *R. A. Bertram.*

14. *Let the guilt of his fathers be remembered by Jehovah, and his mother's sin not blotted out.* This is perhaps the most fearful imprecation in the Psalm, as it extends the consequences of transgression not merely to the children, who might naturally be expected to partake of them, but to the parents. It is not to be forgotten, however, that in all such cases the personal guilt of the implicated parties is presupposed, and not inferred from their connection with the principals. A.

14, 15. The ground of these imprecations bespeaks them very just, though they sound very severe. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account, *the iniquity of his fathers, and the sin of his mother.* These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein; when wickedness has long run in the

blood, justly does the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation who, by putting Christ to death, *filled up the measure of their fathers*, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us and on our children.* H.

16. Because they would show no mercy, let no mercy be shown them. Because they chased down (Hebrew) the afflicted and heartbroken, even to slaughter, let their retribution be just and thorough, following their name and their posterity till their memory is blotted from the earth. These conceptions, a sinner punished in his posterity; punished also by the sin of his father and of his mother coming down upon him, are deeply tinged with the Oriental character. They are peculiar, not merely as being terribly strong, but as involving the sentiment that a man lives in the glory of his ancestry and in the glory of his posterity, and therefore his punishment may be knit together with theirs.

17, 18. Here we come upon grammatical forms which are simply historical, and not at all imperative or optative, *i.e.*, which are not prayer, nor even prediction. The only proper rendering is on this wise: "And he even loved cursing, and consequently [or, then] it came upon him; and he did *not* love blessing, and consequently it kept aloof from him." As he lived in an atmosphere of cursing (we might say), but the Oriental mind puts it, he girt it about him as his robe, therefore he had his fill of it, as water might fill his stomach and oil his bones. That is, God has impressed the law of retribution upon the soul of man, so that it helps to work out this result; upon human society, so that man's social nature and relations help forward this result, and upon the agencies of his own providential government, so that they bring up toward completeness and fulness the results of righteous and terrible retribution. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The *historic fact* is the thing affirmed in these verses. C.—Deep down in every man's soul the justice of the *lex talionis* is established. Retaliation, not for private revenge, but as a measure of public justice, is demanded by the Psalmist and deserved by the crime. S.

18. *And he has put on cursing as his garment, and it has come like water into his inside, and like oil into his bones.* There is an obvious climax in this verse. That which is first described as the man's exterior covering is then said to be within

him, first as water, then as oil or fat, first in the vessels of his body, then in his very bones. The general idea is that the curse, which he denounced and endeavored to inflict on others, has taken possession of himself both within and without. A.

20. Those who answer the manifestations of love on the part of the righteous with hostility in word and deed, commit a Satanic sin for which there is no forgiveness. The curse is the fruit of their own choice and deed. D.

21. BUT THOU. He turns from his adversariness to God, from their curses to His loving-kindness. The emphatic pronoun, and the double name of God, both mark the earnestness of the appeal. P.—*Do Thou for me, O God, the Lord*; appear for me, act for me. If God be for us, He will do for us, will do *more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think*. He does not prescribe to God what He should do for him, but refers himself to His wisdom; “Lord, do for me what seems good in Thine eyes.” H.

For Thy name's sake. He does not say, For my name, that it may be vindicated from reproach and shame, but for Thy name; as if he would say, whatever I may be, O Lord, and whatever may befall me, have respect to Thy name, have regard to it only. We learn here with what passion for the glory of the Divine name they ought to be animated who are peculiarly consecrated to the name of God. He does not say, “Because my case is good,” but “*Because Thy mercy is good.*” Note also he does not simply say, Because Thou art good or because Thou art merciful; but because Thy mercy is good. He had experienced a certain special goodness in the Divine mercy; *i.e.* such timeliness, kind readiness in all afflictions, and help for every kind of affliction prepared and provided. On this he rests hope and confidence, in this takes refuge. All those are truly happy who have had experience of this mercy, and can depend on it with firm hope and confidence.

22. *For I am poor and needy.* Note here how beautifully he unites these arguments. He had said, “*Because Thy mercy is good*,” and he adds, “*Because I am poor and needy.*” He could not have added anything more appropriate; for this is the nature of goodness and mercy, even in the human heart, much more in God, the best and most merciful of all beings, that nothing more easily moves it to give succor than the affliction, calamity, and misery of those by whom it is invoked. *Musculus.*

23. *Shadow declineth.* The shadows

of objects at sunset lengthen every instant and grow faint as they lengthen; and in the instant that they shoot to an immeasurable length disappear. *Bishop Horsley.*—**Tossed up and down.** A Christian is often tossed and shaken, yet is as Mount Zion; he is a lamb and a lion; a reed and a cedar. He is sometimes so troubled that he thinks nothing to be true in religion; yet, if he did think so, he could not at all be troubled. He thinks sometimes that God hath no mercy for him, yet resolves to die in the pursuit of it. He believes, like Abraham, against hope, and though he cannot answer God's logic, yet, with the woman of Canaan, he hopes to prevail with the rhetoric of importunity. *Bacon.*

26-29. A joyous prospect of the end of the affliction. In v. 27 God's hand stands opposed to accident, the work of men, and man's own doing. When God at last interposes, all will undeniably perceive that it is His hand which here performs that which was impossible in the eyes of men, and that it is His work which has been accomplished in this affliction and its issue. He blesses him whom men curse; these arise and are confounded, whereas His servant can rejoice in the end of his affliction. D.

28, 29. It is better here to translate with grammatical precision, on this wise: “They will curse, but *Thou* wilt bless; they have risen up” [as mine enemies], “and consequently were confounded; but Thy servant” [myself, because I am Thy servant] “will rejoice. My haters will be clothed with shame; they will cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle.”

30, 31. The tenses throughout these verses are future, as they were throughout vs. 28, 29. Here [not there] our English version has rendered them accurately. C.—The contrast between this concluding thought and v. 6 is unmistakable. Satan stands accusing at the right hand of the tormentor; God stands vindicating at the right hand of the tormented one; he who delivered him over to human judges is condemned, and he who was delivered over is “taken away from oppression and judgment” (Isa. 53 : 8) by the Judge of the judges, in order that, as we now hear in the following Psalm, he may sit at the right hand of the heavenly King. D.

31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.* One of the oldest rabbinical commentaries has a very beautiful gloss on this passage. “Whenever a poor man stands at thy door, the Holy One, blessed be His Name, stands at his right hand. If thou givest him alms, know that

thou shalt receive a reward from Him who standeth at his right hand." A. E.

If any part of the Bible belongs to a past age, it would seem to be the imprecatory prayers of the Psalms. At least it might be said a later revelation has abrogated their use. And yet there are times now, and men now, and transactions now taking place upon the earth, and wrongs and enormities still heard of, in reference to which these prayers would seem to be still wanted as the most appropriate language. All other speech fails to express the righteous indignation so different from the personal revenge. It demands its own appropriate language, and the ethical want finds its true relief in these portions of the Church's immutable liturgy. *T. Lewis.*

The gentlest hearts burn with indignation when they hear of barbarities to women and children, of crafty plots for ruining the innocent, of cruel oppression of helpless orphans, and gratuitous ingratitude to the good and gentle. We wish well to all mankind, and for that very reason we sometimes blaze with indignation against the inhuman wretches by whom every law which protects our fellow-creatures is trampled down, and every dictate of humanity is set at nought. S.

It now remains to speak of the *imprecations* in this Psalm. In my view our English version gives the imprecatory sense in several passages where the original does not. The true mission of the translator, as of the expositor, is to meet the demands of the original tongue with the utmost possible precision, it being the function of God only to speak the Word; of His servants honestly to interpret. There is real imprecation in this Psalm, and we are now to inquire into its moral character considered as the utterance of the author: Is it, or is it not, consistent with Christian love, with the spirit of the Gospel of Christ?

The solution of this great question turns on a power of mind common to all intelligent moral agents by which we are able to contemplate any other moral agent variously, holding him before our mind, now in one light, now in another, according to the features which are prominent in his case, as thus: We are able to love the *man* and hate the *sinner*; to love him thought of as man; but to hate, not his conduct only but himself, its responsible author, thought of simply as a destroyer of other's happiness. Thinking of him as a sentient being, capable of happiness and of misery, we desire his happiness, we deprecate his misery; but

thinking of him as the deliberate and sworn foe and destroyer of all happiness, even to his utmost power, we wish and pray that God's retribution may seize upon him, arrest his career of mischief, and make his sufferings exemplary for the restraint of others like-minded toward evil. The traitor in arms against his country we shoot down and spare not; the same rebel, wounded, disarmed, and at our mercy, we spare and lift up as swiftly as we smote him when in arms. Thinking of man as a fellow-creature, as one whose sensibilities to joy or woe are like our own, we love his welfare and mourn over his fall; but thinking of him as the enemy of God, as the determined foe of all real, high, and noble blessedness in the universe, our indignation is bound to rise against him; we cannot suppress it; we are false to the highest interests of truth and right if we disapprove or restrain it. The necessity and the responsibilities of civil government in this world of crime furnish apt illustration. The men of largest, purest benevolence are the best men to frame criminal law; the best men to administer it from the bench; the best men to execute it in prison, in penitentiary, or upon the scaffold. Solemnly and firmly, with tender compassion, yet with unflinching fidelity, they may love the culprit, but they must inflict the penalty he deserves. In the righteous demands of law they acquiesce simply because there is a greater good behind which must be protected by the lesser sacrifice of the guilty criminal. Under the stress of a necessity which they deplore, they say from the bottom of their heart, The guilty man must die; we should deprecate his escape; in behalf of all society and of universal good, we feel a sense of relief when justice exacts the murderer's life, blood for blood. The tribunal of the Supreme Judge of the universe differs from this only as being perfect and universal. Justice is the same thing there as here. Benevolence is the same. The ultimate question, therefore, is reduced to this: Shall God reign, or shall Satan? Shall the right triumph, or the wrong? Shall the innocent be protected, or the guilty; the good in heart, or the evil? And to our present point, Where shall our sympathies be; with God, or with His enemies? This is the ultimate question, beyond which we have no occasion to go. C.

Anger against sin and a desire that evil-doers may be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord both enjoined and exemplified. If the emotion or its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul wish the enemy of Christ and

the perverter of the Gospel to be accursed (1 Cor. 16 : 22 ; Gal. 1 : 8) ; and especially, how could the spirit of the martyred saints in heaven call on God for vengeance (Rev. 6 : 10), and join to celebrate its final execution (Rev. 19 : 1-6)? *Kitto*.

Imprecations of judgment on the wicked on the hypothesis of their continued impenitence are not inconsistent with simultaneous efforts to bring them to repentance ; and Christian charity

itself can do no more than labor for the sinner's conversion. The law of holiness requires us to pray for the fires of Divine retribution ; the law of love to seek meanwhile to rescue the brand from the burning. The last prayer of the martyr Stephen was answered not by any general averting of doom from a guilty nation, but by the conversion of an individual persecutor to the service of God. *Thrupp*.

PSALM CX.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 THE LORD saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
- 2 The LORD shall send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion :
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
- 3 Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power :
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
Thou hast the dew of thy youth.
- 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,

Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.

- 5 The Lord at thy right hand
Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.
- 6 He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill the places with dead bodies ;
He shall strike through the head in many countries.
- 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way :
Therefore shall he lift up the head.

PRIEST AND KING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

THE words of our Saviour recorded in Matt. 22 : 41-46 ; Mark 13 : 35-37 ; Luke 20 : 41-44, preclude any other view than that this Psalm is a direct prophecy of Himself. In accordance with these words there is no reference here to David, or to any king of Israel, as a type of Christ. The Psalm is thus raised to a higher plane than most other Messianic Psalms. There is indeed a typical groundwork in the two offices held by men divinely appointed under the Old Testament, and especially by Melchizedek, King of Salem, and priest of the Most High God, but in the Psalm Christ only is addressed or described. *De Witt*.

Paraphrase of the Psalm.

1. "Thus saith Jehovah—it is His revelation that I hear ; it is His Word addressed to One who, though He be My Son, is yet my Lord—'I give Thee honor and dignity equal to My

own, I associate Thee with Myself in kingly rule and dominion, until I have subdued every enemy who shall dare to lift himself against Thee.'"

2, 3. Then turning to the King who has thus been solemnly placed on the throne of Jehovah, and who rules as His vicegerent in Zion, the Psalmist says : "From Zion, Thy royal seat, shall Jehovah Himself, on whose throne Thou sittest, stretch out the sceptre of Thy dominion. So close shall be the fellowship between Him and Thee. Thou shalt sit on His throne ; He shall wield Thy sceptre ; His might shall be Thy might, His kingdom shall be Thy kingdom, and Thou shalt not only subdue Thine enemies, but before they are yet vanquished Thou shalt rule in the midst of them. When Thou goest forth to war, Thine own people shall flock with glad and willing hearts to Thy standard. They shall come clad, not in armor, but in holy vestments as ministering priests, for Thou hast consecrated them to be Thy priestly soldiers. They shall come, a youthful host, in numbers numberless

as the dew, bright and fresh as the dew from the womb of the morning.

4. "Yet another solemn word concerning Thee have I heard. It is a word confirmed by an oath, the oath of the Most High, which cannot be broken. By that oath He hath made Thee Priest as well as King; King Thou art, Priest thou shalt be henceforth; Priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, or by descent through the Levitical priesthood, but after the order of Melchizedek; Priest, therefore, not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile also; Priest not for a time, but forever."

5-7. Then, looking on the leader, the host, the conflict, the poet exclaims: "The Lord, the God of hosts who is with Thee, O King, who is at Thy right hand to succor and give Thee the victory in the battle, hath already crushed the rival monarchs that dispute Thy sway. Thou shalt be a judge and ruler among the nations whom He has given Thee as thine inheritance. The vast battlefield is strewn with the corpses of Thy foes. Far and wide hast Thou extended Thy conquests, vanquishing one leader after another; and Thou shalt reap the fruit of Thy victories, like a warrior who, pressing hotly on the rear of his enemies as they flee before him, scarcely pauses for a moment to snatch a hasty draught from the wayside brook, and then with renewed ardor, with head erect and kindling eye, continues the pursuit. Thus shall victory be crowned, and not a foe remain." P.

This is the counterpart of the second Psalm, completing the prophetic picture of the conquering Messiah. The progressive development of the Messianic doctrine lies in this, that the kingship of Messiah, there alleged and confirmed by a Divine decree, is here assumed at the beginning, and then shown to be connected with His priesthood, which is also solemnly proclaimed and its perpetuity insured by a Divine oath. This constitutes the centre of the Psalm (v. 4), to which all the rest is either introductory (vs. 1-3), or supplementary (vs. 5-7). The repeated, explicit, and emphatic application of this Psalm in the New Testament to Jesus Christ is so far from being arbitrary, or at variance with the obvious import of the Psalm itself, that any other application is absurd. A.

This Psalm is a step in advance in the progress of doctrine in respect to the person and work of the Great Messiah. It appears in the later Prophet Zechariah (6:13), and may be foreshadowed in Isa. 53. This Psalm is applied to the Messiah by the Jewish fathers; by the very early Syriac version in the words: "A prophecy of Christ's victory over His enemies;"

and, higher than all other testimony, by Jesus Himself (Matt. 22:41; Mark 12:35; Luke 20:41). These passages show that the Jews of that age recognized their expected Messiah in this Psalm, and also that Jesus applied the Psalm to Himself in an argument which none of His opponents could resist. Furthermore, the New Testament writers repeatedly recognize and honor this Psalm as referring to Christ by their application to Him of the words, "Sit at My right hand." No special emphasis should be given to the word "sit" as compared with any other posture; position at the right hand is the main thing. Hence Stephen saw Him "standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56), and Paul (Rom. 8:34) has it simply, "*is* at the right hand," etc. Sitting, however, is the usual posture of royalty; a king *sits* on his throne. See other New Testament references, in Matt. 26:64; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21. Another corresponding class of New Testament passages indorses the words, "Make thine enemies thy footstool;" e.g., 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 10:13. To these should be added the strong support given to the Messianic interpretation of this Psalm by the allusion to His priesthood as taught here in v. 4. The writer to the Hebrews makes this point strikingly emphatic (Heb. 5:6-10; 6:20; 7:1-8). C.

If the solemn address, "Sit thou at my right hand," is equivalent to saying, "Be thou associated with Me in my kingly dignity, in My power and universal dominion," then the best comment on the passage is to be found, as even some of the Jewish interpreters have seen, in Dan. 7:13, 14, where "One like the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven, and is brought unto the Ancient of Days, and there is given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him." The two passages, the one from the Psalm and the other from Daniel, are, in fact, combined by our Lord Himself, when standing before the high-priest He says, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The same interpretation is given by Peter (Acts 2:34-36). P.

This Psalm claims emphatically to be the fruit and record of a Divine revelation. It is an oracle, an utterance of Jehovah which He has heard, and which he is to declare to others. It is an oracle which concerns a King who reigns in Zion; it is addressed to One to whom the poet does homage, calling Him "Lord;" it

assures Him of the high favor of Jehovah, who lifts Him to a share in His own regal dignity, giving Him the victory over all His enemies. The poet then pictures the King going forth to battle, surrounded by His youthful warriors, bright and numberless as the dew-drops on a summer's morn, willing to shed their heart's blood in His service, each one robed as a priest, each one a soldier of God. As he gazes on the vision which has been called up by the first word from heaven, another Divine Word sounds in his ear, the Word confirmed by the oath of Jehovah that the King shall also be "a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Then he follows the King in imagination to the war, sees Him winning victory after victory with great slaughter, aided by God Himself in the fight, and securing the fruits of His victories by a pursuit of His enemies, which knows no check even in the burning heat of an Eastern sun.

From Matt. 22 : 41-45 and Mark 12 : 35-37, it appears, first, that David himself wrote the Psalm, and next, that in writing he was moved by the Holy Ghost. David himself, in a confessedly Messianic Psalm, is speaking not of himself, but of his great Descendant, and, so speaking, calls Him his *Lord*. David was able to do this, was able in faith to recognize the true Divine greatness of One who, according to the flesh, would be his Son, because he spake as the organ of a Divine revelation, as "he was moved by the Holy Ghost." This is clearly the scope of our Lord's argument. And if so, then it is plain that there can be no lower reference of the Psalm to David or any other Jewish monarch. It is a prediction, and a prediction of the Christ as the true King, as the everlasting Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

It seems to me, then, that we are shut up to the conclusion, that in this lofty and mysterious Psalm, David, speaking by the Holy Ghost, was carried beyond himself, and did see in prophetic vision that his Son would also be his Lord. Nor is it altogether strange, altogether inconsistent with the course of God's providence, that such a vision should be vouchsafed to one to whom so clear a promise was given that the Messiah should come of his seed, and who in his "last words" pictured in such glowing terms the Righteous Ruler and the blessings of His righteous reign.

While, however, we maintain what our Lord's argument compels us to maintain, that the Psalm is a prediction, we cannot tell to what extent it was a conscious prediction. We do not know how far David himself needed an interpretation of the vision in which he saw the majestic figure

of the priestly King. P. [For a full discussion of the manifold points involved, see Perowne, vol. 2, p. 282. B.]

1, 2. He begins with the solemn words with which a prophetic message is wont to be announced, thus at the outset stamping on the Psalm its true character. The "oracle" or "Word of Jehovah unto my Lord," which he heard, is a new revelation made to him from the heavens. He is taken up and listens to the Divine voice calling to His right hand, to the most intimate communion with Himself, and to wielding the energies of omnipotence, Him whom David knew to be his Lord. And when that Divine voice ceases, the prophetic spirit in the seer hymns the coronation anthem of the Monarch enthroned by the side of the majesty in the heavens. "The sceptre of Thy strength will Jehovah send out of Zion. Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies." In singular juxtaposition are the throne at God's right hand, and the sceptre, the emblem of sovereignty, issuing from Zion, a dominion realized on earth by a Monarch in the heavens, a dominion the centre of which is Zion and the undefined extent universal. A. M.

1. A seat at the right hand of a king is mentioned in the Scriptures as a place of honor, not arbitrarily, but as implying a participation in His power, of which the right hand is a constant symbol. The participation in the Divine power thus ascribed to the Messiah is a special and extraordinary one, having reference to the total subjugation of His enemies. The idea running through the whole Psalm is, that it is in and through Him that Jehovah acts for the destruction of His enemies, and that for this very end He is invested with almighty power, as denoted by His session at the right hand of God. This session is to last until the total subjugation of His enemies, that is to say, this special and extraordinary power of the Messiah is then to terminate; a representation which agrees exactly with that of Paul in 1 Cor. 15 : 24-28, where the verse before us is distinctly referred to, although not expressly quoted. This verse is more frequently quoted or referred to in the New Testament than any other in the Hebrew Bible. It lies at the foundation of all those which represent Christ as at the right hand of the Father. A.

2. His kingdom is set up not by destroying them, but by *subduing* them, so that they become His willing servants. They yield to Him, and He rules over them. It is not here a commission to cut them off, but to make them His friends and dispose them to submit to His authority.

Mere *power* may crush men ; it requires more than that to make rebels willingly submissive, and to dispose them voluntarily to obey. *Barnes*.

The rod of the Lord's strength is to be "sent forth out of Zion ;" the meaning is, the Gospel which is to subdue the world to Christ shall go forth into the world first from Jerusalem where the hill of Zion stood. Other prophecies foretell this. "Out of Zion," says Isaiah, "shall go forth the law," the new law of grace which is to convert the Gentiles, "and the Word of the Lord," he adds, "from Jerusalem." "It shall be in that day," says another prophet "that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." And the fact corresponded with these predictions. *C. Bradley*.—Nor would one err who should call the Cross the rod of power ; for this rod converted sea and land, and filled them with a vast power. Armed with this rod, the apostles went forth throughout the world, and accomplished all that they did, beginning at Jerusalem. *Chrysostom*.

The omniscience of God is displayed in the wonderful fact that in the very land of the covenant, in the very midst of that people who rejected and crucified the Saviour, the first Church of Christ on earth was established. Israel scattered among the nations, and the Church of Christ having begun in Zion at Jerusalem, are the most wonderful and enduring monuments, and incontestable witnesses of the truth of Christianity. *B. Weiss*.

3. Thy people. In the midst of His enemies, the King has His own faithful adherents. God, who holds the sceptre of His Anointed, and assures Him of victory, has also given Him a willing people, working in their hearts by His Spirit joyfulness and courage and ready self-sacrifice. *P*.

Thy people (are) *free-will-offerings in the day of Thy power, in holy decorations, from the womb of the dawn, to Thee (is) the dew of Thy youth*. Every member of this very obscure verse has been a subject of dispute and of conflicting explanations. The common version of the first words (*Thy people shall be willing*) is entirely inadmissible as an exact translation. The idea, however, is the same, but expressed with far more strength and beauty. The plural noun just mentioned is the one used to denote spontaneous gifts, or free-will-offerings, under the law of Moses. By supplying the correlative verb, we obtain the sense, *Thy people* (offer) *voluntary gifts*. But by supplying the substantive verb, which is far more natural and common, we obtain the still more striking sense,

Thy people are themselves such gifts, they freely consecrate themselves to God. *The day of Thy power* is the day in which it is exerted and displayed in the subjugation of Thine enemies. The next phrase literally means *in beauties* (or, *ornaments*) *of holiness*, which may either have its obvious spiritual sense, as in Psalm 29 : 2, or that of *holy decorations* with allusion to the sacerdotal dress, which is expressly called *garments of holiness* (Lev. 16 : 4). The last is the sense put by the modern interpreters upon the phrase, which then means that the people, when they make this solemn offering of themselves to God, appear clothed in sacerdotal vestments as the servants of a priestly King (v. 4 below), and themselves a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19 : 6.) *The womb of the dawn* (or, *daybreak*) is a very strong poetical description of the origin or source of the *dew* which immediately follows, and the sense of which must determine that of the whole clause. Free from objections is the supposition that the clause relates not to the numbers or the beauty of Messiah's people, but to their perpetual succession, expressed by a fine poetical comparison with dew engendered afresh daily from the womb of the morning. *Youth* will then have its proper sense as denoting the perpetual youth of the Messiah, whose body is thus constantly renewed by the successive generations of His people. *A*.

All the people, without distinction, wear holy festive garments. Thus they surround the Divine King like dew born out of the womb of the morning. It is a priestly people whom He leads forth to holy battle, just as in Rev. 19 : 14 heavenly hosts upon white horses follow the Logos of God, a new generation, wondrously born as it were out of heavenly light, numerous, fresh and vigorous like the pearly dew, the children of the dawn. The thought that it is a priestly people leads over to v. 4. The King who leads this priestly people is, as we hear in v. 4, Himself a Priest. The priesthood is united with the kingship in Him, the One that rules out of Zion, just as it had been in Melchizedek, the King of Salem, and that, too, forever. *D*.

God's people are willing in believing, loving, obeying, adhering, living piously and justly in this world ; so that they do not need the constraint of laws or threats, because they are led by the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. *Musculus*.—Here is "leading, but no force ; conduct, but no compulsion." How spontaneously does the person led follow him that leads him ! So it is here. This and all other workings of the Spirit

are admirably suited to the nature of reasonable and free agents. *T. Jacomb.*

The simple term "*willing*" denotes the condition of creatures who suffer themselves to be wrought upon and moved, according to the will of God. They suffer God to work in them to will and to do. They are *willing* to be weaned from their own thoughts and purposes, that the thoughts and purposes of God may be fulfilled in them. God will beautify them with salvation, because there is nothing in them to hinder His working. They will be wise, they will be good, they will be *like God*, for they are "*willing*;" and there proceeds from God a mighty spirit, the whole tendency of which is to make His creatures like Himself. *J. Pulsford.*

There is a general power which goes along with the Gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great Author and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, beside the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the Word, to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. *H.*

Into the world of spiritual darkness and death there must come a Life-Power from above, a Power greater than the soul, and adequate to compass its condition and necessities, a Power knowing how to reach the soul through its own nature, and, in the delicate and sensitive sphere of moral causes, to change the law of action without impairing the acting power, the personality of the soul itself; a Power to quicken, enlighten, renew, restore, by bringing the soul again into its true and normal relations with God, and by bringing God nigh to the soul, that His presence, His truth, His holiness, His love, might act upon it as realities. Christ embodying the truth, the righteousness and the love of God in a living expression that men could see and feel, and bringing home to their hearts the reconciling grace of God by the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, was this Life-Power; a Power which, having in the Atonement gained a leverage against the law of sin and death, can move the world; and which moving ever from that fulcrum, carries on through the ages the work of restoration, till reversing the old law of history it shall make all things new. *Anon.*

It is not true that the Holy Spirit works conversion by a direct, soul-renewing fiat or silent thunder-stroke of omnipotence. He works not

by any short method of absolute will. Working efficiently and, in a certain sense, immediately in the man, or subject, He still circles round the will, doing it respect by laying no force upon it, and only raising appeals to it from what He puts in the mind, the conscience, the memory, the sense of want, the fears excited, the aspirations kindled. He moves upon it thus by a siege and not by a fiat—carries it finally by a process of circumvallation. And when it is really born of God, it will be the result of what the Spirit has wrought by a long, and various, and subtle, and beautiful process, too delicate for human thought to trace. *H. B.*

There are many ways of compendiously expressing the Gospel, but a better it would be hard to find than this, *that it is the good will of God overcoming the evil will of man.* By means no doubt: wondrous means! By His own self-sacrifice; by suffering love; by revelation of truth; by donation of the Spirit, because these and the like things are necessary elements for the case, the nature of man being such as to forbid the hope of any change being wrought in it by mere strength, by what we call omnipotence. Yet all these—written revelation, manifested Christ, Atonement, Comforter, powers of the world to come—are instruments of the good will of God seeking to change, and, in many instances, happily, actually changing the evil will of man. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." God worketh *in* men, "to will and to do of His good pleasure." Then the question of questions to a man must be this: "Am I now, with my will, doing the will of God? Doing it feebly, imperfectly, no doubt, but still doing it, by preference, in choice, with determination, with an honest and supreme desire that I may come to do it more and yet more perfectly, until, on some calm, bright day, the first day of accomplished salvation, I shall begin to do it without defect, intermission, or weariness, like the saints and angels in heaven?" Whoso thus doeth the will of God has entered the world of reality and permanence as one belonging to it. He is now *already* in the ever-abiding state. *Raleigh.*

If Paul had simply bid us work out our own salvation for ourselves he would have bid us do what was impossible; we might go on trying hard all our lives, and at the end of them we should find our salvation just as much out of our reach as ever. On the other hand, if he had simply told us that it is God that works in us both to will and to do according to His own pleasure, without telling us what we have to do in consequence, then he would have given us a

direct encouragement to go on standing idle all our lives, in the expectation that God will come and save us, in spite of our doing nothing toward securing our salvation ; a thing which God has never promised to do, and never will do. We must go on working as incessantly and laboriously as if we had to earn our salvation by our own efforts ; and all the while we must feel, and freely confess, that our salvation must come to us as a free gift from God. And so working, and so confessing, we may look confidently forward to the day when our work will be ended, and our salvation secured. And we shall look forward to it in confidence, for the very reason that it is God alone, and not we, who is doing all the work. *Henry Harris.*

We begin God's service because He calls us to it, we end by loving the service for its own sake. And this is an advanced stage of the Divine life. It implies a greater likeness to God, who doth that which is good, not from any outward obligation, but from the free and unalterable propensity of His eternal nature toward that which is good. We thus cease to be servants, and grow into the life and liberty of sons. Our obedience to God has brought us in happy advance toward His presence. We have been doing the will of the Father, and the consequence is that our own will has become identified with His. Inclination and duty now go hand in hand. The sense of bondage has disappeared, and a sweet sense of free choice has come in its place. We have learned what it is to be holy as God is holy. By serving Him we have found our fruit unto holiness. *W. L. Alexander.*

In the beauties of holiness. In holy vestments as priests. They are at once warriors and priests ; meet for the service of Him who was King and Priest. Neander remarks on the connection between these two sides of the Christian character. God's soldiers can only *maintain their war* by priestly self-consecration. Conversely : God's priests can only *preserve their purity* by unintermitted conflict. *W. Kay.*

Beautiful in holiness—that is the character of all who are made partakers of His grace and Spirit—their character now ; “the beauty of the Lord” is already upon them ; it will be more visibly, more brightly upon them in a brighter world. *C. Bradley.*—Godliness is our spiritual beauty. Godliness is to the soul as the light to the world, to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness that sets us off in God's eye but goodness ; what is the beauty of the angels but their sanctity ? Godliness is the curious embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Ghost ; a soul furnished with godliness is dam-

asked with beauty, and enamelled with purity. Godliness sheds a glory and lustre upon the saints. *T. Watson.*

Holiness is the chiefest excellency of man, his highest advantage above inferior beings. It is the supreme beauty of the soul, the resemblance of angels, the image of God Himself. In this the perfection of the reasonable nature truly consists, and glory naturally results from it. As a diamond, when its earthy and colorless parts are taken away, shines forth in its lustre ; so when the soul is freed from its impurities and all terrene affections, it will appear with a Divine brightness. The Church shall then be glorious when cleansed from every spot and made complete in holiness. *Bates.*—The holiness of a covenant soul is a resemblance of the holiness of God, and formed by it, as the picture of the sun in a cloud is a fruit of His beams, and an image of its Author. The fulness of the perfection of holiness remains in the nature of God as the fulness of the light does in the sun ; yet there are transmissions from the sun to the moon, and it is a light of the same nature both in the one and in the other. The holiness of a creature is nothing else but the reflection of the Divine holiness upon it. *Charnock.*

Holiness is the only means by which holiness can be diffused. It is the wise man that can impart wisdom to others, it is the good man that can diffuse goodness, and it is only the holy man that can diffuse holiness. Every man can bring forth to others only out of the treasures deposited first in his own heart. *Jenkyn.*—Holiness is the end for which we were made, for which we were redeemed, for which God the Holy Ghost is sent down and shed abroad in the hearts that will receive Him. God did not will to create us as perfect. He willed that we, through His grace, should become perfect. But what He willed that we should be, that, if our will fail not, we must become. His almighty will vouchsafes to depend on ours. What God commands, what God wills, what God so willed that He made us for this alone, that we should be holy, and being holy, should share His holiness and bliss, that must be within our reach if we will. The mistake of mistakes is to think that holiness consists in great or extraordinary things beyond the reach of ordinary men. It has been well said : “Holiness does not consist in doing uncommon things, but in doing common things uncommonly well.” Few can ever do great things, and the few who can do them can each do but few. But every one can study the will of God, and can give great diligence to know it and to do what he knows. Your

daily round of duty is your daily path to come nearer unto God. *Pusey.*

Men talk about holiness and pray for it as if it were something entirely apart from their every-day life, something that has nothing whatever to do with their conduct in their domestic, social, and business relations. They sing, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," with glowing fervor, but do not think that the prayer can be answered only by the lifting up of their own lives to the plane of God's requirements. Holiness is not a mere sentiment, not a vague vision of glory overhanging us like a heavenly cloud; not a rapture or an ecstasy; not something which God sends down to wrap us like a garment in its radiant folds. It is the most real and practical thing in this world. If being holy means anything at all, it means being true, honest, upright, brave, pure, gentle, patient, unselfish. It is not all prayer and church-going and hymn-singing; it is life. It is not a Sabbath mood, but a week-day habiliment. We really have no more religion than we get into our every-day life, at home, in business, in all our conduct. We are Christians only so far as the Christ living in us is manifested in Christlikeness before men. *J. R. Miller.*

The conquering King whom the Psalm hymns is a Priest forever; and He is followed by an army of priests. The soldiers are gathered in the day of the muster, with high courage and willing devotion, ready to fling away their lives; but they are clad not in mail, but in priestly robes; like those who wait before the altar rather than like those who plunge into the fight; like those who compassed Jericho with the ark for their standard and the trumpets for all their weapons. We can scarcely fail to remember the words which echo these and interpret them. "The armies which were in heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean"—a strange armor against sword cut and spear-thrust. . . . But this one thing is obvious, that the great power which we Christian men are to wield in our loving warfare is—*character*. Purity of heart and life, transparent, simple goodness, manifest in men's sight, these will arm us against dangers, and these will bring our brethren glad captives to our Lord. We serve Him best, and advance His kingdom most, when the habit of our souls is that righteousness with which He invests our nakedness. Be like your Lord, and as His soldiers you will conquer, and as His priests you will win some to His love and fear. Nothing else will avail without that. Without that dress no man finds a place in the ranks. The image

suggests, too, the spirit in which our priestly warfare is to be waged. The one metaphor brings with it thoughts of strenuous effort, of discipline, of sworn consecration to a cause. The other brings with it thoughts of gentleness, and sympathy, and tenderness, of still waiting at the shrine, of communion with Him who dwells between the Cherubim. And while our work demands all the courage and tension of every power which the one image presents, it is to be sedulously guarded from any tinge of wrath or heat of passion, such as mingles with conflict, and is to be prosecuted with all the pity and patience, the brotherly meekness of a true priest. We are to be gentle, long-suffering, not doing our work with passion and self-will, but remembering that gentleness is mightiest, and that we shall best adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour when we go among men with the light caught in the inner sanctuary still irradiating our faces, and our hands full of blessings to bestow on our brethren. We are to be soldier-priests, strong and gentle, like the ideal of those knights of old who were both, and bore the cross on shield and helmet and sword-hilt. *A. M.*

4. *Melchizedek's order Thy type.* Hebrew, *after the description of.* In Heb. 7 : 15 we find the alternative expression, *according to the likeness of*, which is the exact meaning, the writer there claiming that Christ was "made like to Melchizedek"—that is, that the priesthood of Melchizedek was a divinely instituted, prophetic figure or type of the priesthood of Christ, especially in its combination with His royal dominion. He is not descended from Levi, but from Judah, and is a King on the throne of David, yet He is a Priest, a High-Priest in the temple of God. See the important parallel passage, though Melchizedek is not mentioned, Zech. 6 : 12, 13. There are other typical resemblances exhibited in the epistle, in reply to Jews who questioned whether Christ, as descended from Judah, could be a priest; principally that Melchizedek's name, parentage, birth, and death were not to be found in any priestly genealogy, and that he owed his position to direct Divine appointment on personal grounds, and not to descent from an hereditary line; and further, that he had no successor in his priesthood, but held it till the object of his appointment was accomplished. The writer proves in this and other ways, not only that Christ was truly a priest, but that His priesthood was superior to that of Aaron; and still further, that the introduction, under the Divine promise and oath, of a priest after the prophetic similitude of

Melchizedek and not of Aaron, proves the insufficiency of the latter, supersedes and annuls it, and so virtually abrogates the whole Levitical law, which was founded upon the priesthood, and could not subsist without it (7 : 11-19). There is no mystery connected with Melchizedek or his priesthood. The Revised Version has rendered an important service in substituting "without genealogy" for "without descent" in chap. 7 : 3. *De Witt.*

This verse contains the great central revelation of the Psalm. How weighty it is, and of how vast import, may be inferred from the solemnity of the introduction, "Jehovah hath sworn," and this is carried to the very highest pitch by the addition of the words, "And will not repent," *i.e.*, the decree is absolutely immutable. It is the solemn inauguration of the Messiah in time to the priestly office. It is the first intimation of the union of the kingly and priestly functions in His person. See the latter typical representation of the same truth in Zech. 6 : 12, 13. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells on the significance of each expression in this verse : "With an oath," "forever," "after the order of Melchizedek." He lays stress on the fact that this solemn inauguration into the priestly office was by an oath, which was not the case with the institution of the Levitical priest. This, he observes, is a proof that Christ is Mediator of a better covenant than that of Moses (Heb. 7 : 20-22). He argues that as the priesthood rests on an unchangeable *foundation*, so it is in its *nature* unchangeable ; a priest *forever*. "He, because He abideth forever, hath His priesthood unchangeable" (7 : 23, 28). He enlarges upon all those points in which Melchizedek, rather than Aaron, was the most fitting type of Christ ; passing over, however, in entire silence that which in the Patristic and Romish expositors holds a prominent place—the bringing forth of bread and wine. Another and essential feature of the type which is implied in Heb. 7 is too often overlooked, *viz.*, that the priesthood of Melchizedek was not only before the law, but was a Gentile priesthood, and therefore the most fitting type of a universal priesthood. P.

This name appears before only in a brief incident in the history of Abraham. That incident, however, is of great significance. Melchizedek stands in the covenant made with Noah, Abraham in the more special covenant made with himself. In these two persons the two forms of the covenant with God meet, the one about to set in the obscurity of tradition, the other about to rise in the light of a written revela-

tion. The one excels in breadth, embracing all mankind ; the other in depth, extending to the antitype as well as the type. The antitype, however, exhibits all the breadth of the Noahic combined with the depth of the Abrahamic. He is therefore after the order of Melchizedek. Moreover, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews shows, the Messiah is the King of righteousness, King of peace, without beginning of days or end of life. He appoints bread and wine as the great symbols of salvation, and especially of Himself, as the atoning Sacrifice. He is truly a Priest-King. These are the striking and significant characteristics of the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. M.

These things concerning him are certain : *That he was a mere man and no more. That he came not to his office by the right of primogeniture, or by any way of succession, but was raised up and immediately called of God thereunto, for in that respect Christ is said to be a Priest after his order. That he had no successor on the earth, nor could have, for there was no law to constitute an order of succession, and he was a priest only after an extraordinary call. These things belong unto faith in this matter, and no more.* The first personal, instituted type of Christ was a priest : this was Melchizedek. There were before *real* instituted types of His work, as sacrifices ; but the first person who was solemnly designed to teach and represent Him by what He was and did, was a priest. And God taught herein that the foundation of all the Lord Christ had to do in and for the Church was laid in His *priestly* office, whereby He made atonement and reconciliation for sin. Everything else that He doth is built on the supposition of His priesthood. And we must begin in the application where God begins in the exhibition. An interest in the effects of the priestly office of Christ is that which in the first place we ought to look after. This being attained, we shall be willing to be taught and ruled by Him. *J. Owen.*

At his coronation we hear nothing but the Lord said : "*Sit thou on My right hand.*" But at the consecration of Christ we have a great deal more of ceremony and solemnity, God His Father taketh an oath, and particularly expresseth the nature and condition of His office, *a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek ;* and He confirmeth it unto Him forever, saying, "*Thou art a priest forever.*" *D. Featley.*—What doctrine doth the Scripture afford more comfortable than that *God hath sworn His Son a Priest forever*, to sanctify our persons and purge our sins, and tender all our petitions to His

Father? What sin is so heinous for which such a Priest cannot satisfy by the oblation of Himself? What cause so desperate in which such an Advocate, if He will plead, may not prevail? We may be sure God will be entreated of us, who Himself hath appointed us an Intercessor to whom He can deny nothing; and to that end hath appointed Him to sit at His right hand to make intercession for us. *A. Wright.*

He who fulfilled the destiny of man under the conditions of the present world, He who interpreted the discipline of suffering, He who bore humanity through death to the presence of God, not as one man of men, but as the Head of the whole race, did all this that He might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, that He might apply to those whom He was not ashamed to call brethren the virtue of His life and passion, and reconcile in a final harmony the inexorable claims of law and the infinite yearnings of love. A Priest and yet a King. For, indeed, at first and at last, the kingly and priestly offices cannot be kept apart. He who makes atonement must be a king. He who demands the complete service of every power must hallo the powers of which he claims the ministry. The ruler who consecrates, the priest who rules, must, in the words already quoted, be merciful and faithful; he must have absolute authority and perfect sympathy; authority that he may represent God to man; sympathy that he may represent man to God. And such is Christ, made known to us King and Priest, Priest after the order of Melchizedek, in whose mysterious person the old world, on the edge of a new dispensation, met and blessed the Father of the faithful. *Anon.*

Christ in His priestly office is appointed to bless. Our better Melchizedek is gone in, in His human form, "into the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man;" a little space He tarries for His Church's sake within the veil, and presently we shall behold Him coming forth in His perfect beauty; and standing on the clouds of heaven, at the portals of glory, He will pronounce benediction on His Church. *J. Vaughan.*

Christ's Intercession. There arises from all parts of the world at the morning and the evening, and through the labors of the day, a perpetual incense of adoration and of petition; it contains the sum of the deepest wants of the human race in its fears and hopes, its anguish and thankfulness; it is laden with sighs, with tears, with penitence, with faith, with submission; the broken heart, the bruised spirit, the stifled murmur, the ardent hope, the haunting

fear, the mother's darling wish, the child's simple prayer—all the burdens of the soul, all wants and desires nowhere else uttered, meet together in that sound of many voices which ascends into the ears of the Lord God of hosts. And mingled with all these cravings and utterances is one other voice, one other prayer, their symphony, their melody, their accord; deeper than all these, tenderer than all these, mightier than all these, the tones of One who knows us better than we know ourselves, and who loves us better than we love ourselves, and who brings all these myriad fragile petitions into one prevalent intercession, purified by His own holiness and the hallowing power of His work. *H. B. Smith.*

5-7. The martial strain of vs. 2-4 is resumed. There the might of the King and His army were described, here the conflict and the victory. P.—Some suppose this to be addressed to Jehovah and "the Lord" to mean Messiah, on the ground that they could not each be on the "right hand" of the other. See v. 1. That they *could* be so, however, only shows that the whole description is a figurative one, and that the principal figure has a twofold meaning. *On the right hand* has precisely the same meaning here as in Psalm 109 : 31, where it denotes the place of protection or assistance, the figure being probably derived from the usages of war, in which one who succors or protects another may be said to strengthen his right hand, as the member which he uses in his own defence. In one sense, therefore, the Lord is at the right hand of Jehovah; in another sense, Jehovah is at His. This assistance, far from excluding, presupposes His own action, or rather, what Jehovah is described as doing for Him He does through Him. *A.*

As there is a time of grace and patience, so there is also an appointed time of wrath and vengeance of God. Frequent mention is made in the sacred Scriptures that the wicked will not be left always unpunished, because they condemn the patience of God and provoke His anger; but there will be a time when they will experience the wrath of God. *Muscubus.*

6. *He will judge among the nations; He has filled (them) with corpses—He has smitten the head over much land (or over the wide earth).* By another sudden change of form the Messiah is again spoken of as a third person. The judgment here ascribed to Him is only another name and figure for the conquest just described. The general idea is universal conquest on the part of the Messiah, extending to all earthly powers. *A.*—Literally understood all this

seems very terrible and inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel. Under such figures the triumphs of grace are often exhibited. The sword of the Spirit does not destroy men, but saves them. It is their enmity that is slain. The victory of the Son of God is over their stubborn hearts. Those who have been in arms against Him yield to His gracious rule. *De Witt.*

7. Of the brook, or, "torrent." The victorious leader, who has made so terrible a slaughter that the field of battle is covered with corpses, is now seen pursuing his enemies. Wearied with the battle and the pursuit, he stops for a moment on his way to refresh himself by drinking of the torrent rushing by, and then "lifts up his head," derives new vigor to continue the pursuit. P.

This Psalm has the rhythm and tone of a triumphal march. In words of majestic beauty and of sustained fervor it celebrates the kingdom, the priesthood, the conquests, and the exaltation of Christ. It is the magnificent panorama of the Revelation by John given in miniature, with every principal scene suggested by some leading feature. David, in spirit foreseeing the glory of Christ, calls Him his *Lord* and hears the voice of Jehovah inviting the Messiah to share His throne. As an Oriental conqueror used the necks of captives for his footstool, the absolute triumph of Christ is represented by His putting all enemies under His feet. He shall tread upon death and rise victorious from the grave. But the Church shall be the seat of His gracious power. Gladly owning this redeeming King, His people shall follow His standard with willing hearts; their ranks shall be recruited from rising generations till His hosts, brilliant as the dew in the beauty of holiness, shall also be innumerable as the drops that burst into splendor with the coming of the dawn. More copious even than these liquid jewels from the womb of the morning shall be the myriads of new-born souls bright with the dew of their consecration. This King shall unite in Himself also the priestly functions of no human order or pedigree, but as the spiritual antetype of that royal Priest, the King of peace, who blessed Abraham and receive his homage. All kings shall bow or bend to His authority; all nations shall be gathered before Him in judgment. If at times His triumph seems to be checked, He but pauses, as it were, to refresh Himself by the way, and again lifts up His head.

How blessed and glorious it is to follow such a King! How sad and ruinous to be found among His enemies! J. P. T.

Israel had possessed, so to speak, the three crowns separately. It had the priesthood in Aaron, the royal dignity in David and his line, and the prophetic office. But in the "last days" the triple crown of priest, king, and prophet has been united upon Him whose it really is, even Jesus, a "Prophet like unto Moses," the eternal Priest "after the order of Melchizedek," and the real and ever-reigning "Son of David." And in Him all the promises of God, which had been given with increasing clearness from Adam onward to Shem, then to Abraham, to Jacob, in the law, in the types of the Old Testament, and, finally, in its prophecies, have become "Yea and amen," till at the last all nations shall dwell in the tents of Shem. A. E.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the reasons, relations, and effects of the office which Christ sustains as the High-Priest of His Church. He describes our Lord and Redeemer as the PRIEST, the Great Priest, the High-Priest, sole, supreme; divinely appointed in a manner consonant with His unrivalled dignity; standing in an assumed relation to mankind for the purpose of making a sacrificial and consecrating offering; effecting a real propitiation and expiation for the sin of mankind; rich in power and grandeur, and equally so in compassion and tenderness; taking as His own and occupying as His indisputable right a station of glory and dignity which only Deity could assume; reigning with an invincible dominion over all created beings, to the happiness and joy of the holy, and to the restraint and just punishment of the rebellious; and bestowing on sinful and undeserving men the greatest blessings, real, substantial, enduring, and boundless; the pardon of sin, the favor of God, conformity to the holiness of the Divine nature and everlasting blessedness. Other august and instructive titles are also given to our Lord Jesus Christ in relation to His priesthood. He is held forth to us as the *Messenger*, sent by the Eternal and most merciful Father, and fulfilling the great moral design of the Levitical institution; the *Minister* of the most holy place, presiding over the universal worship of His people and rendering it acceptable to the Throne of perfect purity; the Lord who spake by the prophets and now by His apostles concerning the great salvation acquired by His sufferings; the *Sanctifier*, who by His blood consecrates and presents to God all His true followers; the *Brother* of those for whom

He came to die, and whom He condescends to nominate into this endearing relation to Himself ; the *Surety*, a pledge of salvation from God to man, and of obedience from man to God ; the *Mediator*, transacting the most important concerns between the Righteous Ruler of the world and His revolted subjects, in order to their reconciliation and restoration, and accomplishing this great work by means of His sacrificial blood ; the *Princely Author* of life, faith, and salvation, achieving His great purpose by His sufferings and death ; a *Saviour* to the uttermost, because He offered up Himself and hath an unchangeable priesthood ; an *Intercessor* and *Advocate*, faithfully and powerfully maintaining our infinite interests, upon the ground and reason of the propitiation by His blood ; the *Forerunner*, securing to His followers the heavenly inheritance, by virtue of His priestly obligation ; the *Great Shepherd*, conferring the blessings of the everlasting covenant through the efficacy of His blood ; the *SON OF GOD*, partaking the flesh and blood of the children of Adam, that through His own death He might accomplish their redemption ; and to depreciate whose blood is the most dreadful of offences. Besides these declarations concerning the personal character of our Divine High-Priest, and His qualities in the discharge of His office, the sacred writer furnishes additional illustrations of the *office* itself, and its necessary adjuncts. It stands *alone and unrivalled* ; it is *perfect*, for all the purposes of Divine mercy and wisdom ; it is a *real* priesthood, all others being but emblems and representations of it ; it contained the essential quality of a priesthood, the offering of an *immolated sacrifice* ; this sacrifice is efficacious by a continual *presentation* in the heavenly world ; and it produces the most happy effects, the *ratification* of the promulgated covenant of grace ; Christ's mediatorial right of conferring infinite blessings ; the *reconciliation* of sinners to their justly offended Sovereign ; *entitling* to the full benefits and enjoyments of the great salvation ; it is the great instrument by the efficient grace of the Holy Spirit, in *producing personal holiness* ; by it Christians have the most favored access to the throne of grace. *Anon.*

This Psalm is one of the fullest and most compendious prophecies of the person and offices of Christ in the whole Old Testament. Indeed there are very few of the articles of that creed which we all generally profess, which are not either plainly expressed or by most evident implication couched in this little model. First, the *Doctrine of the Trinity* is in the first words, "*The Lord said unto my Lord.*" There is

Jehovah the Father, and *my Lord*, the Son, and the consecrating of Him to be David's Lord which was by the *Holy Ghost*, by whose fulness He was anointed unto the offices of King and Priest ; for so our Saviour Himself expounds this word "*said*," by the sealing and sanctification of Him to His office (John 10 : 34, 35, 36). Then we have the *Incarnation of Christ* in the words, "*my Lord*," together with His dignity and honor above David (as our Saviour Himself expounds it, Matt. 22 : 42, 45). *Mine*, that is, my Son by descent and genealogy after the flesh, and yet my Lord too, in regard of His higher Sonship. We have also the *Sufferings of Christ*, in that He was consecrated a *Priest* (v. 4) to offer up Himself once for all. We have His *Completed Work* and conquest over all His enemies and sufferings ; His *Resurrection*, "*He shall lift up His head* ;" His *Ascension and Intercession*, "*Sit Thou on My right hand.*" We have here also a *Holy Catholic Church* gathered together by the sceptre of His kingdom. We have the *Remission of sins* comprised in His priesthood, for He was to offer sacrifices for the remission of sins, and "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Eph. 1 : 7 ; Heb. 9 : 26). We have the *Resurrection of the body*, because He must "subdue all enemies under His feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death," as the apostle argues out of this Psalm (1 Cor. 15 : 25, 26). And lastly, we have *life everlasting*, in the everlasting merit and virtue of His priesthood, "*Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*," and in His sitting at the right hand of God, whither He is gone as our forerunner, and to prepare a place for us (Heb. 6 : 20 ; John 14 : 2) ; and therefore the apostle from His sitting there and living ever inferreth the perfection and certainty of our salvation. *E. Reynolds.*

God can abide in His eternity, His immutability, His sublimity, and yet humble Himself and take the form of man and the thought of man. He thus comes down to us in the written Word, so full of the Divine majesty, the Divine holiness, and yet so purely, so intensely human. He comes still nearer to us in the incarnate Word, "the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us ;" and nearer still when Christ took upon Himself our sins, and carried our sorrows, making Himself our Sacrifice, and thus becoming our "Great High-Priest," who, even now, "in the highest heavens," can be touched with a fellow feeling of all our infirmities. Ineffable is the mystery involved in all this, but the fact can be clearly stated, and reason must assent to the glory of the truth, even where it utterly fails

to comprehend. We cannot ascend to heaven, but God can come down to us ; we cannot become Divine, but it is within His almighty power to become human, and thus lift us up to communion with Himself while we still remain human. *T. Lewis.*—To exalt Christ is to ennoble ourselves. To venerate the Prophet is to open the mind to His wisdom. To thrill with faith in the heavenly Priest is to yield the heart to the power of His love. To behold the King's majesty is to let the will find joy in obedience. All life will be simpler for this reverence ; the world more beautiful ; religion more real. F. D. H.

Our Psalm shows us Christ gathering His army in array. He is calling each of us to a place there, in this day of His power and day of His grace. Take heed lest the day of His power should for you darken into that other day of which this Psalm speaks, the day of His wrath, when He strikes through kings, and bruises the head over many countries. Put your trust in that Saviour, my friend, cleave to that Sacrifice, then you will not be among those whom He treads down in His march to victory, but one of that happy band of priestly warriors who follow Him as He goes forth conquering and to conquer. A. M.

PSALM CXI.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.

I will give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart,

In the council of the upright, and in the congregation.

2 The works of the LORD are great,

Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

3 His work is honour and majesty :

And his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered :

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him :

He will ever be mindful of his covenant.

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works,

In giving them the heritage of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are truth and judgment ;

All his precepts are sure.

8 They are established for ever and ever,

They are done in truth and uprightness.

9 He hath sent redemption unto his people ;

He hath commanded his covenant for ever : Holy and reverend is his name.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ;

A good understanding have all they that do thereafter :

His praise endureth for ever.

THIS Psalm and the next are both alphabetical Psalms. In both, the letters of the alphabet mark not only the beginning of verses, as in other Psalms, but the beginning of each several clause of the verses. In both, there are exactly twenty-two lines, each line consisting usually of three words, and in both the order of the alphabet is strictly preserved, which is not the case in other alphabetical Psalms. Finally, so exactly does the structure of the two Psalms correspond, that the first eight verses in both consist each of two lines, and the last two verses of three lines. But the Psalms answer to one another not only in structure,

but in thought. The same significant phrases occur in both, and occur in such a way as to mark the mutual relation of the two poems. In the one hundred and eleventh the mighty deeds, the glory, the righteousness of Jehovah are celebrated in the assembly of the upright. In the one hundred and twelfth the righteousness, the goodness, the blessedness of the upright themselves is described and enlarged upon. The one sets forth God, His work and His attributes ; the other tells us what are the work and character of those who fear and honor God. Thus in Psalm 111 : 3 it is said of Jehovah that " His righteousness standeth fast for-

ever;" in Psalm 112:3 the same thing is affirmed of the man that feareth Jehovah. In Psalm 111:4 it is declared of Jehovah that "He is gracious and of tender compassion;" in Psalm 112:4 the same character is given of the upright. In the one hundred and eleventh Psalm the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenant is magnified (vs. 5, 9), in the one hundred and twelfth the faithfulness of the righteous man, his trust in Jehovah is exhibited (vs. 7, 8). P.

1. Jehovah is to be praised, not only with the voice and the understanding, but with the heart, with all its affections turned to a song of gratitude and love. Solitary devotion hath its beauties and excellencies; but how glorious is it to hear the voices of a whole Christian congregation break forth into hallelujahs, like the sound of many waters and the noise of mighty thunderings, while each one provokes another to continue the blessed employment with unremitted attention and unabated fervor. *Bishop Horne.*

Does any man wish to forget God? Does any man wish to live in sin without being disturbed by the painful thought of judgment? We can tell him how he may insure that—for a time at least. Let him attempt to be wiser than his Maker; let him say, "I can read my Bible at home, and worship God in the open beauties of nature, as well as in a church;" let him give up private prayer, and never attend the Lord's table, giving up all that is sym-bolical in religion. Let him do this, and we will insure him most terrible success; for so "judgment to come" will be to him only an hypothesis, and God's own existence merely a *perhaps*. F. W. R.

2. *The works of the Lord are great.* Their greatness is equally manifest when we turn from the *immensity* to the *variety* of His works. How great are the works of Him who gives to every plant its leaf and flower and fruit; to every animal its faculties and functions; to every man his understanding, affections, and will. What an accumulative idea of the magnitude of His works do we gather from the innumerable multitudes and endless diversities of being called into existence by His powers. *S. Summers.*

The most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works. Your studies of physics and other sciences are not worth a rush, if it be not God by them that you seek after. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God appearing to us in His works, and purposely to peruse them for the

knowledge of God—this is the true and only philosophy, and the contrary is mere foolery, and so called again and again by God Himself. *Baxter.*

The eminent Christian, other things being equal, is the most diligent student of the works and of the Word of God. Such study is well fitted to enlarge and liberalize the mind. We are placed in a creation adapted to awaken the deepest interest. The works of God *are* marvellous; they are *sought out* by all who have pleasure therein. And who can refrain from having this pleasure? Who can be an indifferent spectator amid the changes which are going on around him? Instead of wonder that some men are willing to toil a life long in the study of the works of God, the wonder is that *all* men are not captivated with the pursuit. These studies are called the natural sciences; they are rather Divine sciences; they are fitted to move the mind of man to its lowest depths. Whoever hath an ear may hear. The dull rock has a voice; the dry leaf has a sound; the shell on the ocean's shore is not dumb. It is made according to certain laws. It fulfils its destiny with unerring precision. We may be lost in general admiration while gazing on it; or we may scientifically analyze it as a piece of consummate art. Now the earth is full of such objects. The common Christian may become acquainted with them, and through them adore their Creator. The Christian scholar will find in these objects inexhaustible themes for delightful contemplation. God invites him, and a thousand voices from His works reiterate the invitation. The doors of universal nature are before him. Has he not a key in his own mind to unlock them all? No assignable limit can be set to the material universe. Can any assignable limit be placed on the powers of the contemplating agent? B. B. E.

3. *His work is honor and majesty, i.e.,* all that he does is noble and majestic, worthy of the great King, to whom these epithets are often applied elsewhere. *His work* means specifically here what He does for the protection and deliverance of His people. In the last clause, as in many other places, this work is referred to His *righteousness*, not His *justice*, in the technical and strict sense, but His *rectitude*, including His fidelity to His engagements, and securing the exercise of His covenanted mercy. A.

3-5. Primarily the thought here is of those gracious works of Providence which had so adorned and distinguished the ancient history of the covenant people. It was inspiring to the returned exiles to recall those ancient works,

to think of the mercy that shone forth in them, and of their being impressed on the national heart for everlasting remembrance. C.

4. By the ordinances of the Mosaic law, the coming out of Egypt, the sojourn in the wilderness, and other memorabilia of Israel's history were constantly brought before the minds of the people, and their children were by such means instructed in the wonders which God had wrought in old time. Especially were they designed to confirm the faith of His people in the Divine love, and to make them know that "*the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.*" Grace is as conspicuous as righteousness in the great work of God. S.—Grace is of the greatest and sweetest use to the soul; it is a staff to uphold the soul, and a sword to defend the soul; it is bread to strengthen the soul, and wine to cheer the soul; it is physic to cure all diseases, and a plaster to heal all wounds, and a cordial to strengthen the soul under all faintings. Grace is thy eye to see for Christ, thy ear to hear for Christ, thy head to contrive for Christ, thy tongue to speak for Christ, thy hand to do for Christ, and thy feet to walk with Christ. T. Brooks.

5. **He will ever be mindful of His covenant.** This clause is in the future tense, while all the other clauses are in the past—"He *hath made* His wonderful works to be remembered;" "He *hath given* meat unto them that fear Him;" "He *will ever be* mindful of His covenant;" not *He hath ever been*. Dwelling on these past favors of God to Israel, it is his joy to think that they were but partial fulfillments of a covenant promise which still remained, and in its highest sense should remain forever; and that covenant, itself the memorial or type of the better, the spiritual covenant, the Gospel. So out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh, and he celebrates God's promised truth to Israel as the memorial and pledge of His eternal faithfulness to the New Testament Israel, His blood-ransomed Church. Vidal.

5-9. He has shown His goodness in never failing to supply the need of His people; He gave them manna in the wilderness, He gave them the spoil of the heathen in Canaan; He thus kept with them the covenant which He made of old with their fathers. Not unmindful of other nations, it is to His people that He has specially revealed Himself; He has given them their promised inheritance. As in His works so in His commandments, as in His providence so in His Word, the same truth and faithfulness are visible. Therefore His command-

ments cannot fail; they remain the sure, everlasting pillars of His kingdom. The great seal of all is the redemption which He accomplished for His people; He who brought them out of Egypt will never suffer His covenant to fail. P.

7. The works of God expound His Word, in His works His Word is often made visible. *The acts of God are verity*—that is, God acts His own truths; the works of His hands are His own verity and judgments. When we cannot find the meaning of God in His Word, we may find it in His works; His works are a comment, an infallible comment upon His Word. Caryl.

8. **They stand fast for ever and ever.** That is to say, His purposes, commands, and courses of action. Immutable principles rule in the courts of Jehovah, and He pursues His eternal purposes without the shadow of a turning. He acts in eternity and for eternity, and hence what He works abides forever. Much of this lasting character arises out of the fact which is next mentioned—namely, that they "*are done in truth and uprightness.*" God always acts according to the glorious principles of truth and integrity, and hence there is no need of alteration or revocation; His works will endure till the end of time. S.

9. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable and not to be repealed. His promises and threatenings are all sure and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of no effect. They are established, and therefore *they stand fast forever and ever*, and the Scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in His laws or in His providences. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men's folly and falsehood make them *unstable in all their ways*, but infinite wisdom and truth forever exclude retraction and revocation. *He has commanded His covenant forever.* H.

Sent redemption, commanded His covenant. The deliverance was the more thankworthy, as being upon a covenant account; for thus every mercy is a token of the Lord's favor to His favorite; it is this which makes common mercies to become special mercies. A child of God knows that everything that comes through the Redeemer's hands and by His covenant is the better for it, and tastes the sweeter by far. W. Cooper.

Reverend is His name. The name of God is not God Himself, neither is it our idea of God, but it is that expressed idea of Him which He Himself would have us to possess, and which may be gathered from His own revelation. If the conception which God would have us to cherish of Him can be summed up in one word, then that word is the name of God. *Dods.*—Holy and reverend is His name, and therefore never to be used by us but in a serious manner. Whether we pray or praise, the heart must be deeply possessed with a sense of His excellency; and we must admire Him above all created or imaginable greatness, and mingle reverence with our most delightful addresses. Holy angels and sanctified men, who of all creatures have nearest access to God, most adore and reverence Him, because they are best acquainted with Him, and have the clearest sight of Him. *Anon.*

Since we are baptized, consecrated, and sanctified in this name, and as this name is now made our name, it follows that all the sons of God are, and ought to be called, kind, merciful, chaste, just, true, simple, benevolent, peaceable, and sweetly affectionate in heart toward all men, even toward those who are their enemies. Behold, then, you here see what it is to sanctify God's name and be a saint. Even as a church is dedicated, and set apart for the use of Divine worship only, so also we ought to be sanctified in the whole of our lives, that there may be found in us no use of anything but of the name of God—that is, of kindness, righteousness, truth. Therefore the name of God is either sanctified or profaned, not by the tongue only, but by all the powers of the soul and the body. *Luther.*—We must really and in act will that sanctity which we desire in our prayers. Otherwise, to pray and to sit still; to pray for holiness, and run on in the ways of profaneness; to pray that God's name may be hallowed, and not strive to sanctify it, is rather a feint than a devout prayer, and makes us guilty of a kind of blasphemy, even when we pray "Hallowed be Thy name." *Farindon.*—When we pray for the hallowing of God's name, we pray implicitly for all things necessary and conducing to it; we pray for the agent and for the instrument; we pray for the time and place; we pray for the speaker and for the hearer; and, in one word, we pray for the propagation of the Gospel, that doors may be opened to all men of faith, that so the building may go up of the new Jerusalem. That laborers may be sent into God's harvest, that so the weeds may be plucked up, and the

good corn brought into the barn; that there may be joy in Zion and peace within her walls; that not the trumpet of war, but the trumpet of praise and thanksgiving may be heard among us; that all ears may be circumcised, and all tongues touched with coals from the altar; that so nothing be spoken, nor anything be heard; but tending all to the honor and glory of God's name. *R. Baker.*

10. This is the conclusion drawn from all that goes before. Since all God's dealings with His people are in faithfulness and truth, and His commands not only are but must be right, then the first step in wisdom, its first principle or element, is reverence for such a Being, proved by obedience to His will. The same sentiment occurs in Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Job 28:28. *A.*

The beginning of wisdom—that is, the principle whence it springs and the fountain from which it flows. *W. Walford.*—Men never begin to be wise till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion and has its foundation in it. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom, to worship God and give honor to Him, as our Father and Master. They manage well who always act under the government of His holy fear. *H.*—*The fear of the Lord* is not only the beginning of wisdom, but the middle and the end. It is surely wisdom to love that which is most lovable, and to occupy our hearts with that which is most worthy of our attachment, and the most capable of satisfying us. *Superville.*

This holy fear of God is appropriate and native to the highest and holiest creative intelligence. There is in it no apprehension. It becomes an instant impulse to obedience. It becomes a constant inspiration and stimulant to the augmentation of that holiness in the created heart which recognizes and reveres holiness in God. It becomes not merely a stimulant to virtue, but a positive expanding power of the whole spiritual nature. Reverence is the necessary condition of high attainment. Homage and worship are the beginnings of the highest mental force and culture as well as of the highest moral and spiritual gain. The grandest thought the human mind can take into its compass is that of a personal, sovereign and holy God, the light and joy of the universe, filling it with His intense vitality, presiding over it in His undimmed wisdom with His perfect and eternal holiness. Where that thought comes in to any human soul that soul is expanded and ennobled by it. *R. S. S.*

"The fear of the Lord" in Scripture signifies not only filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion; hence it is explained in the last part of the verse by "*doing His commandments.*" The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of Christianity. *S. Davies.*

A good understanding have all they that do His commandments. They which *do* the commandments have a good understanding; not they which speak of the commandments, nor they which write of the commandments, nor they which preach of the commandments. *H. Smith.*

—A *great* understanding they have that know God's commandments and can discourse learnedly of them; but a *good* understanding have they that do them and walk according to them. *H.*

Over and above all accumulation of knowledge and all discipline of the intellect, there remains, as the indispensable condition of true theological thought, that of purity of soul, the love of truth for its own sake, the willingness to be taught of God, and to do His will, to which is attached the promise that it "shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." The true King's highway to the wisdom which we seek is to be found in an intellect emancipated from prejudice and a heart purified from baseness. *Plumptre.* — Our Saviour prescribes men an unfailing method to assure themselves of the truth of this doctrine. "If any one," says He, "will do the will of the Father, he shall know of My doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." There is a strange intercourse and mutual corroboration between faith and practice. For as belief first engages practice, so practice strengthens and confirms belief. *South.*

A very large portion of the Christian's doubts are not doubts; they are won'ts. The will is not subdued to God. It has not completely surrendered itself to the best it knows, and to the dictates of the Spirit of the Lord and the promptings of the conscience. Often when the man stands doubting, as he supposes he is, the struggle really is between the conscience and the will. That trouble lies at the root of the whole matter. He knows what is right, but hesitates to do the right. When the prodigal said, "I will arise and go to my father," the question was settled. God worketh in us to *will* and to *do*. Let us be workers together with Him in willing and in doing. *Anon.* — And here it is to be observed, that in order to our carrying out the mightiest schemes of God,

it is not necessary that we know what these are. God gives to each what each can do, and by the various gifts and labors of all fulfils His own grand purpose. What we need to know is only the commands of God, what He sees fit for us to do. And doing this we may be sure that, so far as we are concerned, the secret purposes of God are accomplished. All murmuring and excusing is in vain, for these three things, God's commandment, our circumstances, and God's eternal purpose, are all of them springing from one source, the will of God, and do therefore harmonize. Our circumstances are allotted by the same will which commands us. *Dods.*

Know thyself that thou mayest fear God; know God that thou mayest love Him; in this thou art initiated to wisdom, in that, perfected. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; the love of God is the fulfilling of the law. . . . In all thy actions think God sees thee, and in all His actions labor to see Him; that will make thee fear Him; this will move thee to love Him. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, and the knowledge of God is the perfection of love. *Quarles.*

Is it not the highest wisdom to fear such a God as this, so great in His works, so true in His Word, so faithful to His covenant? To fear God and to keep His commandments is the whole duty of man; to praise Him man's highest employment both now and forever. *P.*

The Test of Doctrine.

Verse 10. A good understanding have all they that do thereafter.

The theological demand of the times is that we shall work from facts and not theories; that in our building, facts fit each other so closely, exactly, and beautifully, that there shall be no need of intervening mortar of man's argument to bind and hold them together. The direction in which biblical scholarship has advanced, more than any other, is in the search for facts. Our scientific theologians declare there is a fact basis for the truth of the Gospel's doctrines as valid as that which underlies geology or chemistry in the natural world. Thus the two chief tests of doctrine in the past have been theory and fact, logic and deduction. Formerly men advanced from general principles to conclusions which they said must follow from the necessity of logic. Later men rise from facts by laws of evidence along inductive lines, to an affirmation of the truth. It was first Plato, then Bacon. But Christ announced a new and

Gospel method of testing truth. "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light." And in another place explaining how doctrine may be learned, He says there is only one way. "If any wills to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or not." The English version does not exactly express the idea. Not if any man purposes to do the will of God, but if any man has a desire, bias, aspiration to do the will of God, he shall know. Many people would resolve to do God's will for the purpose of finding out the doctrine. But the test of a doctrine is not in a resolution. The Tyndal prayer-test says we will put men in wards, pray for them in one, and not pray for them in the other, and see what the outcome will be. That was a resolution without any bias toward God's will, merely a critical purpose to find out what God's will was. Of course it would not yield to that test. Our relation to God's will and doctrine must not be that of a critic, must not be the result of a resolution, but of a bias that will incline our being toward His ways—that is, to understand God we must be on His side. It is not so with matters purely intellectual. It does not matter which side you are on when you study gravitation, or chemistry, or mathematics. But Paul says spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. You must have a spiritual eye and occupy spiritual ground. If you want to see truth you must look at it from God's standpoint. If we look at the movement of planets from the earth, they are irregular and confused, but if we could look at them from the sun, they would all appear harmonious. So it is necessary to get near God to see truth. But the only way we can get near Him is in spirit. We cannot have His holy knowledge that looks through all disguises, but we can at least aspire toward Him, and practise, as far as may be, what He commands. We must, as it were, experiment with the truth, by putting it into life. The world, when it comes to consider truth, says, "Think about it." Christ says, "Do it."

It can be brought to the test of experiment. The Gospel can be lived. Christian doctrine can be put into Christian practice, and that leads to Christ.

A great deal of scepticism has a moral rather than an intellectual origin. It is just as true that the doing of God's will leads to a knowledge of God's will, as not to do it obscures that knowledge. Moral vision goes out of the man who refuses to use it. It is a law of grace, as well as nature, that God gives only what we use. The man who does not use spiritual faculties in Christian aspiration shall have no spiritual vision. Darwin says that it is the use that makes the organ, it is the effort to see that makes the eye. It is the effort to be good that opens up spiritual realities. And this spiritual knowledge will come, even through our failures. Christ does not say that the man who does the doctrine shall know. That would discourage us. If the range of our knowledge were only according to our success in doing, we would have narrow horizons. But the measure of it is rather our striving. "If any man wishes to do God's will, he shall know." Not our attainments, but our aspirations are the measure of our progress in Christian knowledge. No wonder that John the apostle wrote so delightfully about Jesus Christ. What an Apocalypse he gave us of future things! The reason of it is apparent; he saw truth from Jesus' breast. In proportion, then, as we are in sympathy with Christ, we will be guided into truth. In proportion as our aspirations are toward God and our practices are of Christian life, will light come into Christian ideas. It is true, of course, that a man's life may be better than his faith; he may be turned aside by mental bias or inherited idiosyncrasies, but it remains true that right living tends to right doctrine. The man who lives godly may be incapable of forming or expressing elaborate doctrine; he may not get any farther than the Lord's Prayer, but he will not come short of faith, hope, and charity. *C. L. Thompson.*

PSALM CXII.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.

Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD,
That delighteth greatly in his command-
ments.

2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth :

The generation of the upright shall be
blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in his house :

And his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness :

*He is gracious, and full of compassion, and
righteous.*

5 Well is it with the man that dealeth graciously and lendeth ;

He shall maintain his cause in judgment.

6 For he shall never be moved ;

The righteous shall be had in everlasting
remembrance.

7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings :

His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid,

Until he see *his desire* upon his adversaries.

9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy ;

His righteousness endureth for ever :

His horn shall be exalted with honour.

10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved ;

He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt
away :

The desire of the wicked shall perish.

ANOTHER alphabetical Psalm of precisely the same character, coinciding with the one before it, even in the number of verses and the number of clauses in each verse. This Psalm begins precisely where the one before it ends, *i.e.*, with the happiness arising from the fear of God (v. 1), the blessed effects of which are then recounted under several particulars (vs. 2-9), and finally contrasted with the fate of the ungodly (v. 10). A.—As in the preceding Psalm, so here also v. 1 sets forth the theme of what follows. What v. 3 there said of the righteousness of God, v. 3 says here of the righteousness of him who fears God ; this also endureth forever ; it is indeed the copy of the Divine righteousness, it is an operation and a gift of God, inasmuch as God's redemptive doing and behavior, when apprehended in faith, works a similar doing and behavior in man, the essential character of which, as v. 9 says, is love. D.—This Psalm is a praising of God for blessing the believer, and the whole Psalm doth prove that the believer is blessed ; which proposition is set down in v. 1, and confirmed with as many reasons as there are verses following. *Dickson.*

I. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord*, because this duty of fearing of God is an act of the mind, and may be done by the man that is destitute of all things but that holy and blessed mind. Blessed, therefore, is that man ; for God hath not laid the comfort of His people in the doing of external duties, nor the salvation of their souls, but in believing, loving, and fearing God. *Bunyan.*

The fear, which is thus the parent of true felicity, is not the dread of personal evil consequences coming from the object of fear, but is simply the reverence of love, that looks up and knows no deeper joy than to gaze upon and be near Him whom it fears. That attitude of the mind, the lowly bowing in the contemplation of transcendent excellence and supreme and perfect sweetness, brings with it necessarily an elevation, a calm, an aspiration, which are conditions of all true joy. No blessedness that earth can bring is worthy for a moment of comparison with the blessedness of sitting quietly at the foot of the Throne, and looking upward to so much of the light as we can discern. The mighty spirits that stand there have triple pairs of wings. "With twain they cover their faces," and yet through the white plumes they can catch glimpses of the glory. "With twain they cover their feet," in reverently hiding their own corporeal inferiority ; and therefore "with twain they do fly" in joyous activity of energetic obedience to the commandment of Him whom they fear. This is blessedness, to blend together in one inseparable band the faith that trusts and the fear that adores and submits. And such fear brings blessedness, because it brings with it the armor against dread, and he that thus fears the Lord without terror is delivered from the possibility of being afraid of anything besides. All earth's threatenings and dangers become dim and shadowy and contemptible to him whose happy eye is fixed on the infinite goodness, greatness, and sweetness of his Father God. If you would

walk in the world with courage, dauntless and noble, fear Him with the fear that knits you to Him, and nothing else shall be your dread. A. M.

That delighteth greatly in His commandments—defining what constitutes the true “fear of the Lord,” which was termed “the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111 : 10). He who hath this true “fear” *delights* (Psalm 111 : 2) not merely in the theory, but in the practise of all “the Lord’s commandments.” Such fear, so far from being a “hard” service, is the only “blessed” one. True obedience is not task-work, as formalists regard religion, but a “delight” (Psalm 1 : 2). Worldly delights, which made piety irksome, are supplanted by the new-born delight in and taste for the will and ways of God. *Fausset*.—When we cheerfully practise all that the Lord requireth of us, love sweeteneth all things, and it becomes our meat and drink to do His will. The thing commanded is excellent, but it is sweeter because commanded *by Him*—“His commandments.” A man is never thoroughly converted till he delighteth in God and His service, and his heart is overpowered by the sweetness of Divine love. A slavish kind of religiousness, when we had rather not do than do our work, is no fruit of grace, and cannot evidence a sincere love. *Manton*.

1-3. The fact that “fearing the Lord” and “delighting greatly in His commandments” are common elements in the same character, suffices to show that this fear is not servile, but filial—is not that of the driven slave, but that of the loving child. The real slave never has “great delight” in his master’s commandments. Let the reader note that this Psalm aims to show that fearing the Lord is true wisdom, and to show it by the absolute *success* of a life so ordered. Wisdom being the best adjustment of means to secure the desired end, the truest test of wisdom is success. That life is a wisely ordered one which brings the best results of blessedness. Hence the scope of this Psalm. The first points made here are : That the wise man is blessed in his children and his children’s children ; in the wealth of his house, made sure under the ancient economy by his abiding integrity and beneficence (“righteousness”). Noticeably the very same words affirm the enduring righteousness of this just man that were used of God in v. 3 of the previous Psalm, suggesting that the good man becomes a follower of God as a dutiful child follows his father. C.

2. His seed shall be mighty upon

earth. That is to say, successive generations of God-fearing men shall be strong and influential in society, and in the latter days they shall have dominion. The true seed of the righteous are those who follow them in their virtues, even as believers are the seed of Abraham because they imitate his faith ; and these are the real heroes of their era, the truly great men among the sons of Adam. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed.* The race of sincere, devout, righteous men is kept up from age to age, and ever abides under the blessing of God. Their children also are under the special care of heaven, and as a rule it shall be found that they inherit the Divine blessing. S.

3. His righteousness endureth. It seems a bold thing to say this of anything human, and yet it is true ; for all human righteousness has its root in the righteousness of God. It is not merely man striving to copy God. It is God’s gift and God’s work. There is a living connection between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man, and therefore the imperishableness of the one appertains to the other also. Hence the same thing is affirmed here of the human righteousness which, in Psalm 111 : 3, is affirmed of the Divine. P.—His character stands the test of examination, overcomes the temptations of wealth, survives the assaults of slander, outlives the afflictions of time, and endures the trial of the last great day. The righteousness of a true saint endureth forever, because it springs from the same root as the righteousness of God, and is, indeed, the reflection of it. So long as the Lord abideth righteous He will maintain by His grace the righteousness of His people. They shall hold on their way and wax stronger and stronger. S.

4. Light. Darkness. While we are on earth we are subject to a threefold “darkness ;” the darkness of error, the darkness of sorrow, and the darkness of death. To dispel these God visiteth us, by His Word, with a threefold “light ;” the light of truth, the light of comfort, and the light of life. *G. Horne*.

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. The great lesson taught by this simile is the connection which obtains between integrity of purpose and clearness of perception, insomuch that a loyal conformity to what is right is generally followed up by a ready and luminous discernment of what is true. It tells us that if we have but grace to *do* as we ought, we shall be made to *see* as we ought. It is a lesson repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, and that in various places both of the Old and New

Testament: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" "The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them;" "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart;" or still more specifically, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." *Chalmers.*

Every Christ-like effort, every Christian grace resolutely carried into practice, not only emits light, but multiplies the light at every point where it touches. Faith nerves itself for a timid venture and throws out its one feeble ray toward a hard task or a hard trial or a hard problem; and behold the thing brightens, and in its own brightening throws light on some other duty or trial, on some great snow-field of lonely sacrifice and patience. Success in the first venture of faith has robbed the larger venture of some of its darkness, and thus the pilgrim of faith walks in ever-growing light. In short, the more faithfully and persistently one addresses himself to doing God's will, the more points his experience affords from which the goodness and love and faithfulness and power of God are reflected. And these points enlighten each other. One part of Christian experience illuminates another part. Each experience takes up the light furnished by the smallest, and reflects and helps to distribute it over the whole area. Thus "light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart." *V.*

Sincerity, an honest desire to know the truth, readiness to make any sacrifice in order to the knowledge, obedience to the truth so far as it is known already—these will bring the light *when nothing else will bring it.* Outward human authority utterly fails; can never make light arise in the darkness. Reason cannot—reason, which is the inward authority. It is a very powerful, and it is a very feeble, instrument. Within its own sphere, when favorably conditioned, it can do much. In the pure discovery of truth, and especially of the truth we most need to know, it can, of itself, do very little. But when you put all your mind and heart into the truth you know, and resolve in the strength of the grace you already believe in, to be true to that truth in all its requirements, and to seek the higher and further truth until you find it—then you turn your face eastward, and, ere long, the morning you look for will be on your face. When intellectual acuteness, and philosophic thought, and all the wisdom of this world can do little or nothing to make things which are obscure, or almost un-

known, plain and clear, moral honesty and moral earnestness will sometimes shoot like beams of light through dark clouds, and the day breaks and the shadows flee away. "*Unto the upright light ariseth.*" "He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Inward loyalty to truth, the fine, pure temper of sincerity, the habit of obedience—these are wonderful revealers. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." A pure heart is better to a man than prophet's message or apostle's miracle, or even outward word of Christ; for this is Christ within; and where "the light of the world" is, where "the truth" is, at least no death-darkness can settle. There may be still some darkness left. But the same inward integrity which helps so much in the discovery of truth, consoles and compensates for truth as yet undiscovered and unknown. The upright man can be content to wait. He, of all men, has the least need to work his heart into the fever of haste and impatience. He has done all that lies in his power; the unattained, the unknown, he can leave trustfully with God. *Raleigh.*

Let what will happen to him, the upright man is full of peace and joy; for he hath met with no disappointment of his designs. His great aim was to please God; and his conscience, from God's Word, assures him that he has done it; and he hath nothing to do further but to wait for the happy time when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man's counsels and actions shall be made manifest, and then he doubts not to receive approbation and praise, and a great reward in that day of the Lord Jesus. *Archbishop Sharp.*

Human life is a mixed and checkered scene, a variation of light and shade, an interchange of bitter and sweet, of joy and sorrow. The storms of adversity do not prevail through the whole period of the most afflicted life; they are relieved by intervals of calm and sunshine. With regard to individuals, it will be found that their sufferings are not uninterrupted, not continuous. Often, amid the darkest dispensations, suddenly the sun arises, dispels the clouds, and the light of joy returns. *R. Hall.*

Whenever God engages in afflicting, He commonly pursues His work until He has prevailed, and His design on the afflicted party be accomplished. He will not cease to thresh and break the bread-corn until it be meet for His use. Give up yourselves, then, to His will; let go everything about which He contends with you; follow after that which He calls you unto; and you will find light arising unto you in the

midst of darkness. Has He a cup of affliction in one hand?—lift up your eyes, and you will see a cup of consolation in the other. And if all stars withdraw their light while you are in the way of God, assure yourselves that the sun is ready to rise. *Owen*.—You are not called on to believe till you are fully able to do so; but you are called on to trust. To trust is in your power. To resign yourself lovingly to God in the full confidence that His love will do all that you need, and that out of darkness He will be sure to bring light; to walk to the utmost of your power by the light that you already have; to hold fast by God's hand, and to trust the promises that He whispers in your conscience—that you can do, and that you ought to do. *Norton*.

The sense of the vastness of the universe, and of the imperfection of our own knowledge, may help us in some degree to understand—not, indeed, the origin of evil and of suffering, but, at any rate, something of its possible uses and purposes. We look around the world and we see cruel perplexities: the useless spared, the useful taken; the young and happy removed, the old and miserable lingering on; happy households broken up under our feet, disappointed hopes, and the failure of those to whom we looked up with reverence and respect. We go through these trials with wonder and fear; and we ask whereunto this will grow. But has nothing been gained? Yes, that has been gained which nothing else, humanly speaking, could give. We may have gained a deeper knowledge of the mind of God and a deeper insight into ourselves. Truths which once seemed mere words, received without heed and uttered without understanding, may have become part of ourselves. Humility for ourselves, charity for others, self-abasement before the Judge of all mankind, these are the gifts that men, the best men, and even the worst men, may gain by distrust, by doubt, and by difficulty. The perplexity, the danger, the grief often brings with it its own remedy. On each bursting wave of disappointment and vexation there is a crown of heavenly light which reveals the peril, and shows the way, and guides us through the roaring storm. Out of doubt comes faith; out of grief comes hope; and “to the upright there ariseth up light in the darkness.” With each new temptation comes a way to escape; with each new difficulty comes some new explanation. As life advances, it does indeed seem to be as a vessel going to pieces, as though we were on the broken fragments of a ship, or in a solitary

skiff on the waste of waters; out as long as our existence lasts we must not give up the duty of cheerfulness and hope. He who has guided us through the day may guide us through the night also. The pillar of darkness often turns into a pillar of fire. Let us hold on though the land be miles away; let us hold on till the morning break. That speck on the distant horizon may be the vessel for which we must shape our course. Forward, not backward, must we steer—forward and forward, till the speck becomes a friendly ship. Have patience and perseverance; believe that there is still a future before us; and we shall at last reach the haven where we would be. *Stanley*.

Righteousness is light and gladness though its way lie through sorrow and sacrifice, and you who are pursuing that road in faith and hope may take this for your comfort that you are going forward to inevitable gladness. God has already wrought out great goodness before your eyes; but that is nothing to the goodness which He has laid up for them that fear Him. If there is assurance of harvest in the buried seed, there is even firmer assurance in the temporary hiding of God's light. If the promise of nature is sure, the promise of faith is no less sure; for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” V.

Gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous—attributes usually applied to God, but here said of “the upright.” The children of God, knowing in their own experience that God our Father is “gracious, full of compassion, and righteous,” seek themselves to be the same toward their fellow-men from instinctive imitation of Him. *Fausset*.

5. Dealeth graciously. Giving means growth. Giving cultivates the faith and love which it manifests. Receiving is passive. A stagnant pool can receive, but a fountain is always giving. True, the fountain is not self-existent and independent. It must be filled by rain from heaven. It must be always receiving, but it gives as freely as it receives. As fast as it is filled it overflows. It is a type and symbol of a true life. God is giving all the time. He gives freely and abundantly. We who receive His gifts are His stewards. We are to use them for Him. That which we have gathered beyond our personal need is not ours. It is given to us in trust. We are to distribute it. The calls upon us for that surplus are many. They are pressing. They are not the calls of our fellow-men merely, but the calls of

God through them. If we respond cheerfully, and if we give according to our ability, God will bless us. He credits us on the books before the throne with all our donations. He accepts them as loans to Him, to be repaid in heavenly treasures. *Babb.*

6. What doth the text say? "*The righteous* (that is, the bountiful) *shall be in everlasting remembrance.*" God remembers our good deeds, when He rewards them (as He does our prayers, when He hears them). If to remember, then, be to reward, an everlasting reward is our everlasting remembrance. Now in those who are to be partakers of mercy, the Divine wisdom requires that they be such as have been ready to show mercy to others. *Mede.*—Those who by patient continuance in well-doing, those who by persuasive eloquence turned men from sin to righteousness, those who taught no lessons but in toil and suffering, unrequited perhaps then, and those who made it the great object of their lives to visit the sick and the prisoner—all who in any form conspicuously exhibited the spirit of Christ do never die even on earth. The fragrance of their memories shall never be exhaled. B. B. E.

A true Christian may travel in life under troubles and contempts; but mark his end, and you shall find (as peace, so) honor. Life is death's seed-time; death life's harvest. As here we sow, so there we reap. He that spends himself upon God and man shall at last have all the honor that heaven and earth can cast upon him. *R. Harris.*—In the Christian life men are not influenced so much by abstract precepts as by living models. And in some respects goodness is more vital and influential when the grave has covered its defects, and time has mellowed its features. Tender and sweetly hallowed influences come from the past. Qualities that might have injured or neutralized the benign effects of the example when the subject of them was living, fade from the memory, while the virtues endure and are in everlasting remembrance. B. B. E.

The good never die. Influence, like the soul itself, is immortal. Example continues to preach when the tongue is silent. Even nature furnishes examples of this truth. The cedar is most useful when dead. There is no timber like it. Firm in the grain, and capable of the finest polish, the tooth of no insect will touch it, and time itself can hardly destroy it. It will diffuse a perpetual fragrance through the chambers which it ceils. The worm will not corrode the book which it protects, nor the moth eat the garment which it guards. Every

true Christian is useful in his life; but the goodly cedars are most useful when cut down and cut up. Luther is dead; but the Reformation he begun lives four hundred years after him, and was never more vital. Calvin is dead; but his vindication of God's free and sovereign grace will never die. Knox, Melville, and Chalmers are dead; but Scotland still retain a Sabbath and a Christian peasantry, a Bible in every house, and a school in every parish. Bunyan is dead; but his bright spirit still walks the earth in his "Pilgrim's Progress." Baxter is dead; but souls are still quickened by his "Saint's Rest" and "Call to the Unconverted." Cowper is dead; but his "Olney Hymns" go on their way rejoicing. Eliot, Carey, Brainerd, Judson, are all dead; but the missionary cause is going forward to victory. Henry Martyn, Mrs. Judson, and Harriet Newell are dead; but who can count the apostolic spirits who have risen up to call them blessed? *Anon.*

7, 8. The epithets "established," "trusting," "upheld," are all strikingly descriptive of the true attitude of faith, as that which *leans upon* and *is supported by* God. P.

7. *Not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.* A man that puts his confidence in God, if he hears bad news of mischief coming toward him, as suppose a bad debt, a loss at sea, accidents by fire, tempests, or earthquakes, as Job had his messengers of evil tidings, which came thick and threefold upon him, yet he is not afraid, for his heart is fixed on God; he hath laid up his confidence in God, therefore his heart is kept in an equal poise; he can say, as Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." His comforts did not ebb and flow with the creature, but his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord. *Manton.*—*His heart is fixed*, or prepared, ready, and in arms for all services; resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures and stand its ground. God is unchangeable; and therefore faith is invincible, for it sets the heart on Him; fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then let winds blow and storms arise, it cares not. *Leighton.*

Times of trouble should be times of confidence; fixedness of heart on God would prevent fears of heart. How? "Trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Providence would seem to sleep unless faith and prayer awaken it. The disciples had but little faith in their Master's accounts, yet that little faith awakened Him in a storm, and He relieved them. Unbelief doth only discourage

God from showing His power in taking our part. *Charnock.*

Anxiety is all vain. After all your careful watching for the corner of the heaven where the cloud is to come from, there *will be* a cloud, and it will rise somewhere, but you never know in what quarter. To-morrow *will have* its cares, spite of anything that anxiety and foreboding can do. It is God's law of providence that a man shall be disciplined by sorrow; and to try to escape from that law by any forecasting prudence is utterly hopeless and madness. And what does your anxiety do? It does not empty to-morrow, brother, of its sorrows; but, ah! it empties to-day of its strength. It does not make you escape the evil, it makes you unfit to cope with it when it comes. It does not bless to-morrow, and it robs to-day. For every day has its own burden. Sufficient for each day is the evil which properly belongs to it. Do not add to-morrow's to to-day's. Do not drag the future into the present. The present has enough to do with its own proper concerns. We have always strength to bear the evil when it comes. We have not strength to bear the foreboding of it. As thy day, thy strength shall be. Then fill the present with quiet, faith, with patient waiting, with honest work, with wise reading of God's lessons of nature, of providence, and of grace, all of which say to us, Live in God's future, that the present may be bright; work in the present, that the future may be certain! *They* may well look around in expectation, sunny and unclouded, of a blessed time to come, whose hearts are already "fixed, trusting in the Lord." He to whom there is a present Christ, and a present Spirit, and a present Father, and a present forgiveness, and a present redemption, may well live exulting in all the glorious distance of the unknown to come, sending out (if I may use such a figure)—sending out from his placid heart over all the weltering waters of this lower world, the peaceful, seeking dove, his meek hope, that shall come back again from its flight with some palm-branch broken from the trees of Paradise. And he that has *no* such present, *has* a future, dark, chaotic, heaving with its destructive ocean; and over it there goes forever—black-pinioned, winging its solitary and hopeless flight, the raven of its anxious thoughts, and finds no place to rest, and comes back again to the desolate ark with its foreboding croak of evil in the present and evil in the future. Live in Christ, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever," and *His* presence shall make all *your* past, present, and fu-

ture—memory, enjoyment, and hope—to be bright and beautiful, because all are centred in Him! A. M.

9. Kindness, benevolence, and generosity are essential to the perfect character; to be strictly just is not enough, for God is love, and we must love our neighbor as ourselves; to give every one his due is not sufficient, we must act upon those same principles of grace which reign in the heart of God. The promises of establishment and prosperity are to bountiful souls who have proved their fitness to be stewards of the Lord by the right way in which they use their substance. S.

Where were the Greek or Latin words for "charity" till Christianity created them, and stamped them with her own Divine image, and made them current amid the coins of a debased mintage, like pure and solid gold? *Eros*, indeed, and *amor* were words which Greek and Latin *did* possess, but they so reeked with heathen associations that Christianity could not rescue them from the mire in which they lay; but *agapa* and *caritas*, with all the mighty revolution which they have effected, and all the angelic utterances which they have inspired, are the glory of Christianity alone. *Farrar.*

Charity is a noble, Divine virtue, the reflex image of our Maker on the soul, and, beyond any other, shadows forth that likeness to God in which man was originally created. It is beautiful and perfect, because it is free from selfishness; for all virtues are more or less excellent in proportion as they are distinguished by self-denial and disinterestedness. "True charity," says Barrow, "is the imitation and copy of that immense love which is the fountain of all being and all good; which made all things, which preserveth the world, which sustaineth every creature. Nothing is more admirable, more venerable, even in the common eye and opinion of men; it hath in it a beauty and a majesty to ravish every heart; even a spark of it, in generosity of dealing, breedeth admiration; a glimpse of it, in formal courtesy of behavior, procureth much esteem, being deemed to accomplish and adorn a man." It is the overflowing of the innate goodness of the soul, and, when genuine and sincere, its loftiest aspirations are for the well-being of man. It is not displayed only in giving to the poor, in relieving distress, or in any of all its manifold functions, with regard to the miseries of our fellow-creatures; but it breathes the sigh of sympathy and compassion, of love and tenderness, to every living thing; and turns not away because man is criminal, or an outcast, or of a different

creed from ourselves. It is a philanthropic, and therefore a universal virtue. No object is too abject or too mean for its capacious bounty ; no human being, however bad, is beneath its notice ; none beyond the limits of its love and sympathy. *Book of Symbols.*—It is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth. *Bacon.*

10. The desire of the wicked shall perish. By the silent laws of God working out surely and silently their deep and awful issues, the consequences of indulgence will become plain to experience. If reason, Scripture, the Spirit's testimony, companions, history, the holy dead did not teach us, time shall. For then, as habit grows obstinate, as the abused spirit begins to turn and prey upon itself, as a perverted imagination wreaks its revengeful retribution, as age or an opening eternity shall displace fleeting fancies with everlasting realities—then will not all these illusions pass away, and the sternest self-denial appear our happiest wisdom ? Then we shall look back on every familiar tampering with vice with infinite disgust and unavailing remorse. F. D. H.

The character which the Psalmist here gives of good men is, that they fear the Lord ; that they take great delight in His commandments ; that they are just and sincere ; that they conduct all their affairs with uprightness ; that they are kind and full of compassion, and love to give alms to the poor. He teaches us that those who live thus are happy ; that God blesses them in their persons, in their posterity, and in their possessions ; that they enjoy peace of conscience ; that they fear no evil, always trusting in the Lord ; and that their righteousness and their memory shall remain forever. *Ostervald.*—It is they who glorify, who shall enjoy Him ; they who deny themselves, who shall not be denied ; they who labor on earth who shall rest in heaven ; they who bear the cross, who shall wear the crown ; they who

seek to bless others, who shall be blessed. *Guthrie.*

Some doubts are sinful. They are so when born of irrational prejudices, or bred of an unregulated life. But doubt, of its own nature, cannot be sinful. For what is it ? It is a certain fluctuation of the mind, this way and that way, while as yet, in the matter in question, it has no convincing evidence. Until such evidence is in the possession of the hesitating individual, the continuance of doubt in him is altogether inevitable, and can therefore be no sin. Do not, then, be afraid to doubt, *i.e.*, to think, to compare, to question, to search, to hesitate, to wait—to wait until the question is honestly settled, and the thing appears as it is. And this is said as a part of religious teaching. We do not need to ask leave of “free thought,” or “rational religion,” to entertain doubts and questionings, even on the highest subjects, if they are honestly entertained. If the doubt is purely intellectual, then there must be applied to it an expressly intellectual solvent. There are questionings and uncertainties which will yield to nothing else. You cannot believe them down ; the very question is, What to believe ? You cannot pray them down ; you can pray only for truth and light. You cannot force them down by acts of will ; such “violence” is not sanctioned in the kingdom. You cannot go round about them and pass on your way. There they are, waiting the honest consideration of your thought, and that settlement which true thinking, sufficient knowledge, and right judgment alone can bring. And if that settlement does not soon come, or does not come easily and all at once, then do not say that the doubts are resolved, or make believe even to your own mind as if they were. But just let them stand, and, meantime, go along the path of duty and obedience as far as it lies plainly before you, not doubting that, soon or late, there will be to you also a fulfilment of the promise, “unto the upright light ariseth in the darkness.” A. R.

PSALM CXIII.

- 1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise, O ye servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD.
- 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.
- 3 From the rising of the sun unto the going
down of the same
The LORD's name is to be praised.
- 4 The LORD is high above all nations,
And his glory above the heavens.
- 5 Who is like unto the LORD our God,

- That hath his seat on high,
- 6 That humbleth himself to behold
*The things that are in heaven and in the
earth ?*
- 7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth up the needy from the dunghill ;
- 8 That he may set him with princes,
Even with the princes of his people.
- 9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house,
And to be a joyful mother of children.
PRAISE YE THE LORD.

THE LOWLY EXALTED.

IN the Jewish Liturgy the so-called *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118), also called the Egyptian *Hallel*, as distinguished from the Great *Hallel* (Psalm 136), begins with this Psalm. This first Psalm of the series continued to be sung while the temple stood, and is still recited in Palestine eighteen times a year, apart from its customary, though not legal use, at the new moon. Outside of Palestine it is now yearly recited twenty-one times, on account of the addition of three great feast-days. At the family celebration of the Passover, Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the emptying of the second cup, and Psalms 115-118 after the meal, and after the filling of the fourth cup. *Moll.*—This last, probably, was “the hymn” which our Lord and His apostles are said to have sung after His last Passover. *P.*—Tradition shows that the ancient Jews perceived in these six Psalms some link of close connection. They all sing of God the Redeemer, in some aspect of His redeeming character ; and this being so, while they suited the paschal feast, we can see how appropriate they would be in the lips of the Redeemer, in His upper room. *A. Bonar.*

The Psalm may be said to be a connecting link between the song of Hannah and the “Magnificat” of the Virgin. *P.*

3. The believer's heart is formed for and his soul delights to praise the Lord at all times ; for he sees himself infinitely and entirely indebted to the grace of God for all he is, all he enjoys, and all he hopes for. It is his grief that he cannot praise the Lord as he would ; for worthy is the Lord of unceasing praise. His mercies are

renewed every morning, continued unto evening, and repeated in the night-season. *W. Mason.*

4. *High above all nations (is) Jehovah ; above the heavens (is) His (glory).* The two clauses are declaratory of His infinite superiority both to the animate and inanimate creation, each being represented by its noblest part ; the former by mankind, and that considered not as individuals but nations ; the latter by the heavens. *A.*—His glory is *above the nations*, and *above the heavens*, and yet neither is neglected by Him ; *God is great, yet He despises not any* (Job 36 : 5). *He humbles Himself to behold* all His creatures, all His subjects, though He is infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency, and felicity of the Divine nature, it is an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of His eternal counsel, and into the hand of His universal providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth (Dan. 4 : 35). *H.*

5, 6. The more we know of the extent of creation the loftier is our conception of Him who sits in high authority over the concerns of so wide a universe. But is it not adding to the bright catalogue of His other attributes, to say that, while magnitude does not overpower Him, minuteness cannot escape Him and variety cannot bewilder Him ; and that at the very time while the mind of the Deity is abroad over the whole vastness of creation, there is not one particle of matter, there is not one individual principle of rational or of animal existence, there is not one single world in that expanse which teems with them, that His eye does not discern as constantly, and His hand does not guide as unerringly, and His Spirit does not watch and

care for as vigilantly as if it formed the one and exclusive object of His attention. *Chalmers.*

We can no more fathom the depth of the Divine condescension than we can measure the height of the Divine greatness. It is the infinite grandeur of God that magnifies His condescension. It does more than adorn and augment it ; it makes it infinite. In both cases our finite understanding fail us. Like men standing on the shore of a wide ocean, we can see a vastness that surprises and fills the mind, but there is beyond our sight a boundless, immeasurable expanse, which no eye can reach. The goodness of God is as great as His majesty ; as much exceeding all our conceptions of it as the glory that fills heaven and earth passes our understanding. It is not such mercy as we expect, or desire, or need ; it is such mercy as corresponds with the grandeur of Jehovah, such mercy as even towers above His grandeur, and becomes the chief glory of His wonderful name. *C. Bradley.*

Two opposite results spring from the same order of thoughts with respect to the Divine Being. Among men of the world, wise as they are, in proportion as they have had high and exalted views of God, those lofty ideas tend to distrust ; while just in proportion as we are enlightened on the very same subjects by the Scriptures of truth, rightly and spiritually understood, we as well as the authors of these sacred books, in proportion as we see the glory and the grandeur of God, are excited to a filial and comforting trust. There are two propositions in the text which human reason could never unite. "*Who dwelleth on high,*" but yet He "*humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth.*" And the reason why unassisted human faculties could never unite these two ideas is, that they could not, in the nature of things, be united but by a third discovery, which must have come from God Himself and show the two in perfect harmony, the discovery that "*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" *Richard Watson.*

If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon Him, that He might seek and save them that were lost ! Here indeed He humbled Himself. *H.*

7. From among those things that make God worthy to be praised the Psalm gives prominence to His condescension toward that which

is lowly. What is meant is the humility of God, which stoops down for the exaltation of the lowly, and which performs its utmost in the work of redemption. This explains why it is that Mary, in her "*Magnificat,*" breaks forth into the same strain as the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2) and this Psalm. *D.*

Almighty God cannot look above Himself, having no superiors ; nor about Himself, having no equals ; He beholds such as are below Him, and therefore the lower a man is, the nearer unto God ; He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5 : 5). He pulls down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth them of low degree. The Most High hath special eye to such as are most humble ; for, as it followeth in our text, "*He taketh up the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the dirt.*" *Boys.*—Great faith, then, ought to be exercised toward such a God. It is a lessening of His honor to allow either sins, or troubles, or wants to sink us into despair. He can stoop lower than we can fall. He can raise the meanest and poorest higher than the most heavenly-minded can conceive. He can succor where human kindness would abandon, comfort where the tenderest earthly friend would forsake, pardon where the most merciful of His creatures would condemn. Our firmest confidence, our most enlarged expectations, can never equal His love. *C. Bradley.*

9. *Make the barren woman a joyful mother of children.* He governs all things in the private family, as well as in the public weal. Children and the fruit of the womb are a gift and heritage that cometh of the Lord. It is God only who makes the barren woman "*a mother,*" and that "*a joyful mother.*" *Boys.*

The historical allusion here is to Hannah who, with other long childless mothers mentioned in the sacred history, was a type of the Church in its low estate, and more especially in exile. *A.*—The curse of barrenness was so bitter a thing in Jewish eyes that its removal was hailed as a special mark of Divine favor. The allusion to it here was suggested, doubtless by Hannah's history, and by the strain of Hannah's song, quoted in vs. 7, 8. *P.*

Praise ye the Lord. We may look abroad and see abundant occasion for praising God in His condescension to human affairs ; but, after all, if we wish to find occasions of praise that most tenderly affect the heart, they will be most likely to be found in the domestic circle ; in the mutual love, the common joy, the tender feelings which bind together the members of a family. *Barnes.*

Praise ye the Lord. The music concludes upon its keynote. The Psalm is a circle, ending where it began, praising the Lord from its first syllable to its last. May our life-psalm partake of the same character, and never know a break or a conclusion. In an endless circle let us bless the Lord, whose mercies never cease.

Let us praise Him in youth, and all along our years of strength ; and when we bow in the ripeness of abundant age, let us still praise the Lord who doth not cast off His old servants. Let us not only praise God ourselves, but exhort others to do it, and join with them in extolling the name of Him whose mercy endureth forever. S.

PSALM CXIV.

1 WHEN Israel went forth out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange
language ;

2 Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

3 The sea saw it, and fled ;
Jordan was driven back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams,
The little hills like young sheep.

5 What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest ?
Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back ?

6 Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams ;
Ye little hills, like young sheep ?

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the
Lord,

At the presence of the God of Jacob ;

8 Which turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.

THE date and author of this Psalm are unknown. Its energy and fire ; its abruptness, brevity, rapidity ; its realization of miracles as acting ; the astonishment of the Psalmist at the terror of the sea, the flight of Jordan northward, the quaking of the mountains and all hills ; and the conclusion, that a look of the God of Jacob did these miracles, and turned the rock, not into water, but a pool of water, and the flint into a springing fountain, make up, says Herder, a picture of sublimity to which no parallel can be found. No other language could, with propriety and simplicity, express the images contained in the Psalm ; and no other history (it is needless to say) could furnish truths for the foundation of it. G. H. S. J.

This is perhaps the most beautiful of all the Psalms which touch on the early history of Israel. It is certainly the most graphic and the most striking in the boldness of its outlines. In structure it is singularly perfect. This rests upon the common principle of pairs of verses, and thus we have four strophes, each consisting of two verses ; each of these verses, again, consists of two lines, in which the parallelism is carefully preserved. The effect is produced not by minute tracing of details, but by the boldness with which certain great features of the history

are presented. A singular animation and an almost dramatic force are given to the poem by the beautiful apostrophe in vs. 5, 6, and the effect of this is heightened in a remarkable degree by the use of the present tenses. The awe and the trembling of nature are a spectacle on which the poet is looking. The parted sea through which Israel walks as on dry land, the rushing Jordan arrested in its course, the granite cliffs of Sinai shaken to their base, he sees it all, and asks in wonder what it means ? Then it is that the truth bursts upon his mind, and the impression of this upon the reader is very finely managed. The *Name* of God, which has been entirely concealed up to this point in the poem (even the possessive pronoun being left without its substantive, "Judah was His sanctuary, Israel was His dominion"), is now only introduced after the apostrophe in vs. 5, 6. "The reason seems evident, and the conduct necessary, for if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap and the sea retire ; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, His name is not mentioned till afterward ; and then, with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced all at once in all His majesty" (*Spectator*). P.

This gem of Hebrew poetry serves to show

how beautifully they could weave into their songs for the sanctuary the grand facts of their nation's early history. The prayer of Nehemiah (chap. 9) witnesses to the use made of those same grand facts in their historical point of view, to inspire faith, to encourage prayer, and to suggest the great moral lessons taught there concerning their nation's God and His people. C.—There is here the highest poetry; but the poetry is the offspring of adoring faith, the rapt religious inspiration of which it is an outburst. And, as it could only have been written by one whose soul was penetrated by the *historic reality* of the Exodus, and before whose eye it stood up as one stupendous series of supernatural events fresh as those of yesterday, so the inspiration of this exalted lyric cannot possibly penetrate the soul that has discarded the Exodus as an historical event, nor can even its poetry seem otherwise than turgid. *D. Brown.*

1, 2. The introduction sets forth at once both the great redemptive act and also the end of the redemption; viz., that God Himself might dwell among and rule His people. This sanctifying of the nation, as a nation to Himself, took place in the wilderness before the law was given: "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19 : 6). P.—The whole people at the coming out of Egypt were separated unto the Lord to be a peculiar people, a nation of priests whose motto should be, "Holiness unto the Lord." The nation was peculiarly Jehovah's dominion, for it was governed by a theocracy in which God alone was King. It was His domain in a sense in which the rest of the world was outside His kingdom. S.

3. The passage of the Red Sea and of the Jordan are combined, not only as miracles of a similar character, but as marking the beginning and the end of the great deliverance, the escape from Egypt, the entrance into the Promised Land. P.

3, 4. The foundation of that new beginning in connection with the history of redemption was laid amid majestic wonders, the world of nature being enlisted in God's service and being made to sympathize with His aims. The dividing of the Red Sea commences, and the dividing of the Jordan closes, the journey through the wilderness to Canaan; the sea turned aside, the Jordan halted and was dammed up to the north, in order that the redeemed people might march through. And between these two great wonders of the Exodus from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan there stands out the not less great wonder of the giving of the law. The skipping of the mountains like rams and of the

hills like lambs depicts the quaking of Sinai and its environs. D.—The same power that fixed the fluid waters and made them stand still, shook the stable mountains and made them tremble; for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. H.

5-7. When the poet asks, "What aileth thee, O sea, that thou fleest?" he is living as it were in that olden time as if he were a contemporary, or the present and that far-off past fuse together in his mind; and therefore the answer he gives himself to his own question assumes the form of a triumphant summons. It is the Lord, the God of Jacob so mighty in wonders, before whom the earth must tremble. D.

8. These miracles at Horeb and Kadesh are selected as the most striking proofs of "God's absolute creative omnipotence, and of the grace which changes death into life." They are, moreover, parallel miracles, like the two mentioned in v. 3, and thus the poetical effect is heightened. P.

The rock into a pool of water. The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel, turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel. As they were protected, so they were provided for, by standing miracles; for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters into which the flinty rock was turned, "and that rock was Christ." For He is a fountain of living waters to His Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace. H.

The flint into a fountain of waters. The causing of water to gush forth out of the flinty rock is a practical proof of unlimited omnipotence and of the grace which converts death into life. Let the earth then tremble before the Lord, the God of Jacob. It has already trembled before Him, and before Him let it tremble. For that which He has been He still ever is; and as He came once He will come again. D.

Our deliverance from under the yoke of sin is strikingly typified in the going up of Israel from Egypt, and so also was the victory of our Lord over the powers of death and hell. The Exodus should therefore be earnestly remembered by Christian hearts. Did not Moses on the mount of transfiguration speak to our Lord of "the exodus" which He should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem; and is it not written of the hosts above that they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb? Do we not ourselves expect another coming of the Lord, when before His face heaven and earth shall flee away and there shall be no more sea? We join then with the singers around the Passover table and

make their Hallel ours, for we, too, have been led out of bondage and guided like a flock through a desert land, wherein the Lord sup-

plies our wants with heavenly manna and water from the Rock of Ages. Praise ye the Lord. S.

PSALM CXV.

- 1 NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But unto thy name give glory,
For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.
- 2 Wherefore should the nations say,
Where is now their God ?
- 3 But our God is in the heavens :
He hath done whatsoever he pleased.
- 4 Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but they speak not ;
Eyes have they, but they see not ;
- 6 They have ears, but they hear not ;
Noses have they, but they smell not ;
- 7 They have hands, but they handle not ;
Feet have they, but they walk not ;
Neither speak they through their throat.
- 8 They that make them shall be like unto
them ;
Yea, every one that trusteth in them.
- 9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD :
He is their help and their shield.

- 10 O house of Aaron, trust ye in the LORD :
He is their help and their shield.
- 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD :
He is their help and their shield.
- 12 The LORD hath been mindful of us ; he will
bless us :
He will bless the house of Israel ;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
- 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD,
Both small and great.
- 14 The LORD increase you more and more,
You and your children.
- 15 Blessed are ye of the LORD,
Which made heaven and earth.
- 16 The heavens are the heavens of the LORD ;
But the earth hath he given to the children
of men.
- 17 The dead praise not the LORD,
Neither any that go down into silence ;
- 18 But we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.
Praise ye the LORD.

THIS Psalm was probably composed for the service of the second temple, while yet the taunts of their heathen adversaries were ringing in the ears of the returned exiles, and while yet contempt for the idolatries which they had witnessed in Babylon was fresh in their hearts. The Psalm opens with a confession of unworthiness, and a prayer that God would vindicate His own honor against the scoff of the heathen (vs. 1, 2). It exalts Him, the invisible, omnipotent, absolutely Supreme Ruler of the universe, and pours contempt upon the idols and their worshippers (vs. 3-8). It bids all Israel, both priests and people, put their trust in Him who is alone worthy of trust, the help and shield of His people (vs. 9-11). It promises that Jehovah shall give His blessing to them that thus trust in Him, and calls upon them in return to give Him thanks forever (vs. 12-18). P.

1. Not unto us. The repetition of these words expresses the more vividly the deep sense of unworthiness, the unfeigned humility which claims nothing for itself. P.—*Give glory, for thy mercy, for thy truth.* The glory meant is not that of former, but of future deeds. The implied petition is, that God would interpose for the deliverance of His people, not to do them honor, but to glorify Himself, and especially to vindicate His mercy and fidelity, which seemed to be dishonored by His desertion of the chosen people. The favor sought is the completion of the work of restoration, still imperfect, though auspiciously begun. A.

This is not an exhortation to men to ascribe glory to God, but a prayer to God that He would glorify Himself for His own name's sake. The address is to the Lord, and the imperative, "Give glory," is prayer that He would secure it for Himself. This by no means

conflicts with the delightful duty devolving on God's people to give Him all glory; it rather assumes this, and goes still further, even to the prayer that God would do the great things we ask of Him, not to glorify us, but Himself. C.—This is not a doxology or form of thanksgiving, but a prayer. Not for our safety or welfare so much as for Thy glory, be pleased to deliver us. Not to satisfy our revenge upon our adversaries; not for the establishment of our own interest, but for the glory of Thy grace and truth do we seek Thine aid, that thou mayest be known to be a God keeping covenant; for mercy and truth are the two pillars of that covenant. *Manton.*

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Though all outward discipline, and labor, and sorrows, and disappointments, and struggles, the efforts that we make after victory, though all these prepare Christians, and make us capable of receiving the gift, yet the gift comes only out of His infinite and undeserved, and, God be thanked! inexhaustible forgiving goodness and mercy. Though there is no heaven except to the victor, yet the victor does not fight his way into heaven, but Christ gives it to him. And when we stand as, God be thanked! we may hope to stand before that throne, we shall forget all about rewardableness and reward, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name" we give glory. Thou dost give me the grace to fight; Thou dost teach my hands to war; Thou dost cover my head in the day of battle; it is Thine own grace in me that thou dost crown. Thou art first, and last, and all—the motive and the strength of the conflict, the reward and the rewarder of the victory. All, Lord! all that I have is Thine, and mine is only weakness, and sin, and defeat. A. M.

Men see not one half of the realities of life. The true, real world is the unseen. The great transactions are wrought in the inner man. We are often led by a hand we do not see, and drawn on by a sweet influence we cannot define. Only the more spiritual, saintly souls discern God. But we at last come to see what God hath wrought. That will be a wondrous recognition of the all-working Spirit when a vast redeemed race shall, in review of life's checkered course, sing the new song, and exclaim with deep significance, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." *Chapman.*

The noble host of reformers that have stood between old abuses and their victims are His army. The conquerors of oppression, of

crime, of poverty, of superstition, of oceans that lay this side of heathenism, have all conquered in the name of Him who came to open prison-doors, and set the bruised at liberty. The valiant priests of labor have been but servants of that great High-Priest, passed into the heavens, who sanctified all lawful industry when he said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And all the lengthening train of redeeming charities and philanthropies lift their accordant anthem to the one Redeemer, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory!" F. D. H.

1, 2. He assigns three reasons why God should seek the glory of His name in preserving His people: Because He is merciful; because He is true and faithful in observing His promise; that the Gentiles may not see God's people in a state of destitution and find cause for blaspheming Him or them. He therefore says, "*for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake,*" show thy glory, or give glory to Thy name. *Bellarmino.*

3. The answer to the taunt of the heathen, who, seeing no image of Jehovah, mocked at His existence. First, He is *in heaven*, invisible indeed, yet thence ruling the universe; next, *He doeth what He will*, in fine contrast with the utter impotence of the gods of the heathen. P.—It would be folly to assert the like concerning idols; therefore, if the heathen say, *Where is your God?* we reply, *He is in heaven*, but where are your idols? In the earth, not making the earth, but made from the earth. *Geier.*

4-8. Turning the tables and retorting their reproaches, the Psalmist says, "Their gods are nothing but a *variety of manufactures*; man-made things; at best, but silver and gold; often of wood only. See the same way of exposing the folly of idol worship (Isa. 40: 18-20; 44: 9-20; 46: 5-7; Jer. 10: 3-15). They are made with mouths, but these are only mere imitations, with no power to speak. As the Hebrew has it, they *will* not speak (future tense); they never will, never can, say the first word. So in all these specifications, the future means not only that they cannot now, but that they *never* will or can. They have hands, but they handle nothing; never use them; never even *touch* with those useless hands. "Neither speak they through their throat"—means they never make even the inarticulate, guttural noises common to the lower animals, which fall far short of the articulate voice. No less void of sense than these senseless idols are all their makers and their worshippers. This very worship proves their miserable folly. C.—

They have mouths, but they speak not for our direction ; eyes have they, but they see not our condition ; they have ears, but they hear not our supplication ; they have hands, but they work not our redemption. These were not the gods that made men, but the gods that men made. *W. Secker.*

They have hands, but they handle not. Even their artist therefore surpasseth them, since he had the faculty of moulding them by the motion and functions of his limbs, though thou wouldest be ashamed to worship that artist. Even thou surpassest them, though thou hast not made these things, since thou doest what they cannot do. *Augustine.*—*Do not mutter in their throat.* The meaning is, that they cannot even make the faintest and most inarticulate guttural noise, like the lower animals ; much less speak as men. *A.*

S. They that make them images show their ingenuity and doubtless are sensible men ; but *they that make them* gods show their stupidity and folly, and *are like unto them.* as senseless, blockish things ; *they see not* the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation ; *they hear not* the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare His glory. By worshipping these foolish puppets they make themselves more and more foolish *like them*, and set themselves at a greater distance from everything that is spiritual, and withal they provoke God to *give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment* (Rom. 1 : 28). *They that trust in them* act very absurdly and unreasonably ; are senseless, helpless, useless, like them ; and they will find it so themselves to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they, to their cost, when their gods are gone. *H.*

Every one is just what his God is ; whoever serves the Omnipotent is omnipotent with Him ; whoever exalts feebleness in stupid delusion, to be His god, is feeble along with that god. This is an important preservative against fear for those who are sure that they worship the true God. *Hengstenberg.*—It belongs to the essential nature of religious worship to assimilate the moral attributes of the worshippers to those of the object of worship. The heathen themselves recognize this principle. "The sum of religion," said Pythagoras, "is to be like him whom thou worshippest." "Think of Buddha," say the priests of that pretended deity, "and you will be transformed into Buddha." This is consonant to the highest reason. The heart seeks to be in favor with its god ; and what more natural means to that

end than the imitation of his qualities and actions—the assimilation of our character to his ? The god whom we worship must constitute our ideal of perfection ; and the nearer we approach our ideal, the higher, in our own estimation, will be the degree of excellence which we have reached. Every act of worship, therefore, every prayer, every devout aspiration, every serious thought of the Divine nature, must tend to make us one with our God, and to transfer to ourselves the impress of His character. *E. C. Wines.*

"They that make them," says the Psalmist, "are like unto them." The man that makes a god is sure to resemble him. Selfishness, avarice, cupidity, are all idolized in Mammon. The man that puts Mammon in the place of the Eternal God becomes assimilated to the god to whom he bows ; and more and more, as years roll on, the higher and nobler qualities of his nature are eliminated before the baser and viler. Thus the intended process of education is practically inverted ; instead of learning to be men and rising to be Divine, the process of development sets in exactly the opposite direction, and men in this world learn to be more and more unmanlike, until the revolting consummation is reached, when the man seems to be transformed into the fiend, and the human seems lost in the devil. *Aitken.*

We may make a special application to the times in which we are now living. The god of modern thought is the creation of the thinker himself, evolved out of his own consciousness, or fashioned according to his own notion of what a god should be. Now, it is evident that such a being is no god. A god who can be fashioned by our own thoughts is no more a god than the image manufactured or produced by our own hands. The true God must of necessity be His own revealer. *S.*

It is evidently to be seen that the heathen religions are nothing but an abuse of the natural inclination which all men have to worship God, whom, because they know not, they guess at in the dark ; for that they know there is and ought to be something that hath the care and providence of their affairs. But their religions were made lasting by policy and force, by ignorance and the force of custom, by the preferring an inveterate error and loving of a quiet and prosperous evil, by the arguments of pleasure and the correspondencies of sensuality, by the frauds of oracles and the patronage of vices, and because they feared every change as an earthquake, as supposing overturnings of their old error to be the destruction of their

well-established governments. *Bishop Taylor.*

9-11. Trust in Jehovah, in contrast with the "trust" of v. 8. Trust in Jehovah, for He is not like the idols, He is the living God, "the help and the shield" of them that trust in Him. Trust in Jehovah, for He *hath been* mindful of us in times past, He *will* bless us in time to come (v. 12). The threefold division—Israel, house of Aaron, they that fear Jehovah—is the same as in Psalm 118: 2, 3, 4. P.

"*He is the help*" of His people; they are helpless, and vain is the help of man; there is no help but in the Lord, and He is present, seasonable, and sufficient help. Jehovah the Father has promised them help, and He has laid help upon His Son for them; and has set up a throne of grace, where they may come for grace to help them in time of need. Christ has helped them out of the miserable estate they were fallen into by sin; He helps them on in their way to heaven, by His power and grace, and at last brings them thither. The Spirit of God helps them to the things of Christ; to many exceeding great and precious promises; and out of many difficulties, snares and temptations; and He helps them in prayer under all their infirmities, and makes intercession for them, according to the will of God; and therefore they should trust in the Lord, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Gill.*

11. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord. An exhortation in general to trust in Him, is a privilege great and glorious; but for a man to be singled out from his neighbors, for a man to be spoken to from heaven, as it were, by name, and to be told that God has given him a license, a special and peculiar grant to trust in Him, this is abundantly more; and yet this is the grant that God has given that man that feareth the Lord. *Bunyan.*

12. The Lord hath been mindful of us; He will bless us. God hath, and therefore God will, is an ordinary Scripture argument. *Trapp.*—He has already shown His gracious recollection of us by beginning to bless us, and He will still go on to bless us; an idea simply but beautifully expressed by the repetition of the verb. A.—The repetition of the word "bless" adds great effect to the passage. It is His nature to bless, it is His prerogative to bless, it is His glory to bless, it is His delight to bless; He has promised to bless, and therefore be sure of this, that He will bless and bless and bless without ceasing. S.

13. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. Art thou in thine own

thoughts or in the thoughts of others, of these small ones, small in grace, small in gifts, small in esteem upon this account? Yet if thou fearest God indeed, thou art certainly blessed with the best of saints. The least star stands as fixed as the brightest of them all in heaven. "He shall bless them that fear him, small and great." He shall bless them with the same blessing of eternal life. For the difference in degrees of grace in saints doth not make the blessing, as to its nature, differ. It is the same heaven, the same life, the same glory, and the same eternity of felicity, that they are in the text promised to be blessed with. *Bunyan.*

15. The Lord which made heaven and earth. Christ fills all the space between God and man. There is no need for a crowd of shadowy beings to link heaven with earth. Jesus Christ lays His hand upon both. He is the head and source of creation; He is the head and fountain of life to His Church. Therefore He is first in all things, to be listened to, loved, and worshipped by men. A. M.

17. (It is) *not the dead* (that) *are to praise Jehovah, and not all* (those) *going down to silence.* This may be regarded as a further reason for expecting the Divine protection. God has chosen a people from among the nations of the earth, to praise Him not when dead but living, not in the silence of the grave, but with their voices in the present life. Thus understood, the verse teaches nothing as to the employments of the disembodied spirit, or of soul and body in the future state. All that is affirmed here (and perhaps in other places like it) is that the praises of the chosen people, as such, must be limited to this life. A.—**Into silence.** Into the grave—the land of silence. Nothing is more impressive in regard to the grave than its utter *silence*. Not a voice, not a sound, is heard there. Perfect stillness reigns: and the first sound that shall be heard there will be the archangel's trump. *Barnes.*

17, 18. The Psalm thus closed was one of the songs of the second temple. What we hear in it is the voice of the Church rather than of an individual soul. And this may assist us in perceiving its entire harmony with faith in the heavenly glory. It much concerns the honor of God that there be continued on the earth a visible Church, in which His name may be recorded from generation to generation. That is a work which cannot be performed by the dead. Since, therefore, the uppermost desire of the Church ought ever to be that God's name may be hal-
lowed, His kingdom advanced, and His will done in the earth; it is her duty to pray for

continued subsistence here, on the earth, to witness for God. And it is to be carefully observed, that not only in this passage, but in all the parallel texts in which the Psalmists seem to speak doubtfully or disparagingly of the state of the departed, it is in connection with the interest of God's cause on the earth. The thought that is uppermost in their hearts is, that "in death there is no commemoration" of God—no recording of His name for the salvation of men. This single circumstance might,

I think, suffice to put the reader on his guard against a precipitate fastening on them of a meaning which would exclude the hope of eternal life. It goes far to show that what the Psalmist deprecates is not death simply considered, but premature death. Their prayer is, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days" (Psalm 103 : 24). And I do not hesitate to say that there are men so placed in stations of eminent usefulness that it is their duty to make the prayer their own. *W. Binnie.*

PSALM CXVI.

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| <p>1 I LOVE the LORD, because he hath heard
My voice and my supplications.</p> <p>2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
Therefore will I call <i>upon him</i> as long as I
live.</p> <p>3 The cords of death compassed me,
And the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me :
I found trouble and sorrow.</p> <p>4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD ;
O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.</p> <p>5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous ;
Yea, our God is merciful.</p> <p>6 The LORD preserveth the simple :
I was brought low, and he saved me.</p> <p>7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul ;
For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with
thee.</p> <p>8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.</p> <p>9 I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.</p> <p>10 I believe, for I will (or, when I) speak :
I was greatly afflicted :</p> | <p>11 I said in my alarm,
All men are a lie.</p> <p>12 What shall I render unto the LORD
For all his benefits toward me ?</p> <p>13 I will take the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.</p> <p>14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD,
Yea, in the presence of all his people.</p> <p>15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of his saints.</p> <p>16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant :
I am thy servant, the son of thine hand-
maid ;
Thou hast loosed my bonds.</p> <p>17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanks-
giving,
And will call upon the name of the LORD.</p> <p>18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD,
Yea, in the presence of all his people :</p> <p>19 In the courts of the LORD's house,
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
PRAISE YE THE LORD !</p> |
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In this Psalm one who has been in peril of death (vs. 3, 9, 15) gives thanks to God with a full heart for the deliverance which has been vouchsafed to him. Beginning with the expression of a love to God called forth by His mercy, the Psalmist then passes in review all God's goodness, till he feels that it surpasses infinitely not only all his deserts, but all adequate power of acknowledgment (v. 12) ; and he con-

cludes by declaring that, in the most public manner, before the assembled congregation, he will confess how great the debt he owes, and bind himself solemnly to the service of Jehovah. The Psalm is evidence of the truth and depth of the religious life in individuals after the return from the exile ; for there can be little doubt that it must be assigned to that period. Many words and turns of phrases remind us of earlier Psalms,

and especially of the Psalms of David. His words must have laid hold in no common degree of the hearts of those who were heirs of his faith, and have sustained them in times of sorrow and suffering; and nothing would be more natural than that later poets should echo his strains, and mingle his words with their own when they poured forth their prayers and praises before God. P.—The Psalm exhibits a power and depth of spiritual life not exceeded in any part of Israelitish history. This has been appreciated in the Christian Church, and has made the Psalm very precious to those who have had like experience of suffering and relief. *De Witt.*

1, 2. All the tenses have an eye to the present, thus: I have loved the Lord and do still love Him, because He not only hears my supplications now, but will hear in all my future life. Because He has bent His ear low to my feeble voice, therefore will I call upon Him in both prayer and praise throughout my days of life. The calling upon God, thought of here, manifestly included praise. This is the grateful utterance of the convalescent who has felt the pains and prostrations of disease, but now looks out once more upon the joys of active life and usefulness. C.

1. I love the Lord. Love, the true love of God, is the love of His truth, of His holiness, of His whole will; the true love is that which reflects itself in obedience; the true love is that which stirs and purifies the conscience. *Vinet.*—Love begets love. 'Tis a flame that communicates itself. They that have much forgiven them, much done for them, much laid out for them, and much laid up for them, will love much. Our love to God is the reflection of His love to us. *We love Him because He first loved us. J. Mason.*

"Because He first loved us," the effect follows that we love, we love Him, we love all men. We cannot help it. Because He loved us, we love, we love everybody. Our heart is slowly changed. Contemplate the love of Christ, and you will love. Stand before that mirror, reflect Christ's character, and you will be changed into the same image from tenderness to tenderness. There is no other way. You cannot love to order. You can only look at the lovely object, and fall in love with it, and grow into likeness to it. And so look at this Perfect Character, this Perfect Life. Look at the great Sacrifice as He laid down Himself, all through life, and upon the Cross of Calvary; and you must love Him. And loving Him, you must become like Him. *H. Drummond.*

We cannot love by commandment, or because

we think it duty. There is but one way of loving, and that is to see the lovely. The disciple who loved Jesus was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Generalize that, and it teaches us that, they love who know that Christ loves them. His Divine and eternal mercy is the foundation of the whole thing. Our love can never be anything else than the echo to His voice of tenderness, than the reflected light upon our hearts of the full glory of His affection. No man loveth God except the man who has first learned that God loves him. We have a Gospel that is worth the preaching when we can come to men with no love in their hearts and say, Listen to this: you have to bring nothing, you are called upon to originate no affection; you have nothing to do but simply to receive the everlasting love of God in Christ His Son, which was without you, which began before you, which flows forth independent of you, which is unchecked by all our sins, which triumphs over all our transgressions, and which will make us—loveless, selfish, hardened, sinful men—soft and tender and full of Divine affection, by the communication of its own self. A. M.

When a man's prayers are answered, love is the natural result. According to Alexander the text may run, "I love because Jehovah hears my voice, my supplications." This also is true in the case of every pleading believer. Continual love flows out of daily answers to prayer. S.—It is a striking remark, ascribed to Augustine, that prayer is the measure of love. A remark which implies that those who love much will pray much, and those who pray much will love much. This remark is not more scripturally than philosophically true. It is the nature of love to lead the person who exercises this passion out of himself. His heart is continually attracted toward the beloved object. He naturally and necessarily exercises, in connection with the object of love, the communion of the affections. And this communion of the affections is the essential characteristic, and it may be said, the essence and sum of prayer. In acceptable prayer the soul goes forth to God in various acts of adoration, supplication, thanksgiving, and praise—all of which imply feelings of trust and confidence, and particularly love to Him who is the object of prayer. Accordingly he who loves much cannot help praying much. And on the other hand, when the streams of holy communion with God fail in any considerable degree, it is a sure sign that there is a shallowness and drought in that fountain of love from which they have their source. *Anon.*

All the graces of the Spirit are stirred and ex-

exercised in prayer ; and, by exercise, strengthened and increased. Faith, in applying the Divine promises which are the very ground that the soul goes upon to God ; Hope looking out to their performance, and Love particularly expressing itself in that sweet converse, and delighting in it as love doth in the company of the person loved. And as the soul delights in freedom of speech with its beloved Lord, so it is continually advanced, and grows by each meeting and conference, beholding the excellency of God, and relishing the pure and sublime pleasures that are in near communion with Him. Looking upon the Father in the face of Christ, and using Him as a Mediator in prayer, it is drawn to further admiration of that bottomless love which found that way of agreement, that *new and living way* of our access, when all was shut up, and we to have been shut out forever. And then the affectionate expressions of that reflex love, finding that vent in prayer, do kindle higher ; and being as it were fanned and blown up, rise to a greater, and higher, and purer flame, and so tend upward the more strongly. *Leighton.*

He who loves Christ unselfishly is ever in the spirit of communion with Christ, and with all who are dear to Christ. Because he loves Christ he is ready to serve Christ, and is ready to serve those whom Christ makes His own representatives. No matter what he is doing, whether he is at work or at worship, or at recreation, he is in the attitude of readiness for service at the call of Him whom he loves. His communion with his Lord, in this sense of readiness for service, is no more real in one place or in one occupation than in another, even though he recognizes his duty and his privilege to be in one place or in one occupation for the time being, as alone consistent for that time with the service he owes to his Master. Bound to his Lord more closely than a loving mother is bound to her child, or than a loving friend is bound to his friend, the disciple of the Lord Jesus is by this binding love in constant and unfailling communion with Him in whom he lives and moves and has his being. And here, as in no other sphere of being, he who enjoys this spirit of communion may be sure that it is recognized, welcomed, and reciprocated by Him toward whom it is lovingly exercised. *This communion is ever intercommunion.* S. S. T.

Because He hath heard my supplications. It is the design and manifest working of all our painful experience to purify and strengthen love as the pure element of heaven within us. I know not how to speak

of the beauty and resources of that goodness which worketh in us a passion in which we not only resemble perfection, but may go on to possess it. There are limits to our advancement in everything but love. Whatever else we can possess or know is no protection against sorrow and despair, but this sheds a light and a cheering about the heart which no calamity can expel. Out of the greatest distresses it comes a victor, laden with the spoils of every foe. From the dust our bed, and the flesh our prison, it enables us to rise and soar as in a heaven of our own. H. H.

2. David saith : *I love the Lord*, because He hath granted me that which I supplicated to Him for. But did this grant of what he had asked take him off from asking more ? The next words show us what his resolution was upon that grant. "*Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.*" *Caryl.*—A godly man will seek God's face evermore ; he calleth upon God as long as he liveth. Breathing heavenward in prayer is the beginning and ending of his spiritual life upon earth, as we see in Paul and Stephen. Paul begins his life with prayer, and Stephen ends his with it. He never taketh his leave of prayer till he is entering into the place of praise. Prayer is his element ; he cannot live without it and communion with God in it. Prayer is the vessel by which he is continually trading into the Holy Land ; he sendeth it out fraught with precious graces—faith, hope, love, desire, godly sorrow, and the like—and it cometh home many times richly laden with peace, joy, and increase of faith. *Swinnock.*

Awe and love combined are perfect adoration, and in that adoration the soul is satisfied, earth is glorified, heaven is in our hearts, and all our human love raised into something more intense and pure when it breathes this air of the Eternal. Prayer is the expression of this adoring love, as necessary to man as the adoring love is necessary ; and till awe ceases to exalt the soul, and love to be its food, the soul of man must pray. Men may call prayer an absurdity, deny its work, banish its influence, but nature and God will be too strong for them. These men will glide into the absurdity they laughed at when their heart is passionate with sorrow ; and as to banishing its influence, they must banish veneration and love from the heart, and then tear away the heart itself, ere they can banish prayer. Its force is here, within us, here in the depth of our want. *S. A. Brooke.*

5. *The Lord is gracious* in hearing, He is "*righteous*" in judging, He is "*merciful*" in

pardoning, and how, then, can I doubt of His will to help me? He is righteous to reward according to deserts; He is gracious to reward above deserts; yea, He is merciful to reward without deserts; and how, then, can I doubt of His will to help me? He is gracious, and this shows His bounty; He is righteous, and this shows His justice; yea, He is merciful, and this shows His love; and how, then, can I doubt of His will to help me? If He were not gracious I could not hope He would hear me; if He were not righteous, I could not depend upon His promise; if He were not merciful, I could not expect His pardon. *R. Baker.*

6. He helped me. Helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else desire had failed; helped me to wait, else faith had failed. *H.*

7. The deliverance vouchsafed in answer to prayer stills the tumult of the soul. The rest is the rest of confidence in God. *P.*—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul," to thy rest in calm and cheerful submission to God's will, delight in His service, satisfaction in His presence, and joy in communion begun with Him here below which is to be perfected above in its full fruition. Holy souls rest in God and in His will; in Himself as their God, their portion, and their chief good, in whom they shall have all that they can need, or are capable of enjoying to complete their blessedness forever. *D. Wilcox.*

Satisfied that he owes his deliverance to God, the Psalmist encourages his own soul to be tranquil once more. Thou hast been disturbed with the sorrows of death, and thy rest has been rudely broken. But God hath delivered thee, return unto thy rest, O my soul. We cannot doubt where that soul's point of rest would be found. It simply goes back to God who has dealt bountifully and rests in Him. Rests *lovingly*; "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice." Rests *obediently*; "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Rests *adoringly*; "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." Rests *thankfully*; "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." Rests *believingly*; "I believed, therefore have I spoken." God is to that soul the permanent centre of love, obedience, adoration, thanksgiving, and faith. A religion in which God is not the rest of the soul, the goal of hope, the prime impulse to duty, the supreme source of comfort and wisdom, is a contradiction of terms. "Religion is the maintenance of a real relation with the personal God, or with a Divine Person really incarnate in

Jesus Christ. Accordingly religion, both Jewish and Christian, is described as a covenant; it is a bond or understanding between the nation or the soul and God; or, still more, it is personal communion with God. 'That which we have seen and heard,' says John, 'declare we unto you, that ye also may have communion with us; and truly our communion is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.'"
(*Whittier.*) This is the very spirit of this verse. The Psalmist exhorts his soul to return unto its rest; not because it has heard of God, or has seen His power in nature; not because he recognizes Divine order in the universe, not because his poetical feeling is kindled by the thought of Divine majesty and glory, but because *he has had personal dealings with God.* That this point of rest may be clearly, sharply defined to us, God presents Himself in Christ as the soul's rest. In Christ He stands, saying to a restless world, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Incarnate Rest comes down to man. The God of rest becomes man, and the life and the words of the Son of Man are a thousandfold echo of the words, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." *V.*

The rest of which the text speaks is the rest of a being who has found his proper and congenial sphere. In reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ the soul finds the centre of repose for which it had been sighing in vain. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden," is the invitation of Incarnate Love, "and I will give you rest." And in the soul that yields to this invitation there rises the response of its deepest nature, the instinctive throb of a new yet natural affection, the calm sense of existence fulfilled and unexplained hope and desire solved in fruition, the witness in its own inmost consciousness that its true rest is found at last. This rest is attainable through Christ alone. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him." He offers pardon to the guilty, purity to the defiled, peace, joy, hope, heaven to the wretched, or that which includes them all, that strange, unearthly blessing, *rest*, to the weary and heavy-laden soul. *Caird.*

8. *For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* The triune God has given us a trinity of deliverances; our life has been spared from the grave, our heart has been uplifted from its griefs, and our course in life has been preserved from dishonor. Salvation, joy, and holiness must go together, and they are all provided for us in the covenant of grace. Death is vanquished, tears

are dried, and fears are banished when the Lord is near. S.

9. He that *rests in God* cannot but *walk before Him*, and by *walking before*, we come to *rest in God*. *Returning to rest* is an act of *confidence*, since there is no rest to be had but in God, nor in God but by believing reliance on Him. *Walking before God* is an act of *obedience*; when we disobey we wander and go astray, only by obedience we walk. Now these two are companions and ever go together; confidence being a means to quicken obedience, and obedience to strengthen confidence. *N. Hardu.*

10. *I believed, for (thus) I speak.* I must have exercised faith, or I could not thus have spoken. The Septuagint version, retained in the New Testament (2 Cor. 4 : 13), clothes the same essential meaning in a different form, *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* It was because his faith enabled him to speak, so that his speaking was a proof of faith. A.—*I have retained faith when I spoke.* D.—*I have faith when I speak.* The former of these verbs is in the perfect tense, which indicates firmly established and permanent confidence, in distinction from transient emotion. Literally, *I believe when I speak.* The second verb in the imperfect tense expresses a passing present, with reference to what he is now saying about the goodness of Jehovah in his great trouble. The emphatic pronoun *I* in v. 10 and repeated in v. 11, is in both cases in apposition to the subject of the preceding verbs, and that both clauses are virtually relative, giving a reason for his confidence. He learned to trust God's faithful grace, not from the testimony of others, but from his own personal experience of anguish and sorrow, as described in vs. 3, 4. In his danger and alarm he had looked to men for sympathy and aid, and had to testify that all their promises were falsehood. The contrast between man's treachery and God's faithfulness as thus personally tested and attested is very striking, and would be much less effective in the absence of the emphatic pronoun. *De Witt.*

The Psalmist declares that he *stays himself* upon God ("I believe"), for he had looked to himself, and there had seen nothing but weakness; he had looked to other men, and found them all deceitful, treacherous as a broken reed. P.

Faith is the only good reason for religious speech. The difference between belief and faith is only this: By the former we hold the truth; by the latter it holds us. The former has no determining influence on the character, but faith, in proportion as it is real, commands the

entire life. The truths we hold are grand and awful enough to sweep every thought, affection, and purpose before them. We believe glorious and dreadful things, so glorious, so dreadful, the world could not resist a life that would faithfully reproduce them. Let us hide the Word of God in our hearts till it melts into our experience, till it reappears in new forms in our prayers, our actions, the tenor of our lives, and then we will understand that the depth of our faith measures the breadth of our influence. *Interior.*

A higher tone of spiritual life would prove that the Gospel was mighty to mould and ennoble character. If our own souls were gleaming with the glory of God, men would believe that we had met more than the shadow of our own personality in the secret place. If the fire of faith were bright in us, it would communicate itself to others, for nothing is so contagious as earnestness. If we believed, and therefore spoke, the accent of conviction in our tones would carry them deep into some hearts. If we would trust Christ's cross to stand firm without our stays, and, arguing less about it, would seldomer try to *prop* it, and oftener to *point* to it, it would draw men to it. A. M.

11. *I said in my terror, All mankind (are) false.* The form of expression in the first clause is borrowed from Psalm 31 : 22. But instead of being a confession of error it is here rather a profession of faith. Even in the midst of his excitement, terror, panic, he could turn away from all human aid and trust in God alone. The proposition, *all mankind are false, i.e., not to be trusted or relied upon*, implies as its complement or converse, therefore God alone is to be trusted.

12. *How shall I requite to Jehovah all His bestowments upon me?* Between this verse and that before it, we must supply the thought that his faith was rewarded and justified by the event. This is indeed implied in the interrogation now before us. A.

What shall I render? Love and thankfulness are easily resolved into each other. He begins with, "*I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice;*" and to enkindle this grace into a greater flame he records the mercies of God in some following verses; which done, then he is in the right mood for praise, and cries: "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?*" *Gurnall.*—What reward shall we give unto the Lord for all the benefits He hath bestowed? From non-existence He waked us into being; He ennobled us with understanding; He taught us arts to promote the means of

life ; He commanded the prolific earth to yield its nurture ; He bade the animals to own us as their lords. For us the rains descend ; for us the sun sheddeth abroad its creative beams ; the mountains rise, the valleys bloom. For us the rivers flow ; for us the fountains murmur ; the sea opens its bosom to admit our commerce ; the earth exhausts its stores ; each new object presents a new enjoyment ; all nature pouring her treasures at our feet, through the bounteous grace of Him who wills that all be ours. *Basil.*

No one will affirm that the manna was the less bountiful proof of the care of God, because, in order to suit the convenience of the Israelites, it did not fall irregularly, but at periodical intervals, and was gathered every morning, that those who partook of it might be strengthened for the journey of the day. And will any one maintain that our daily food is less the gift of God because it is sent not at random, but in appointed ways and at certain seasons, that we may be prepared to receive it ? Does it not appear as if it were the very frequency of the gift, and the regularity of its coming which lead mankind to forget the Giver ? *M' Cosh.*

We owe more to God for redeeming us than for making us ; His Word made us ; but when He came to redeem us, that Word must be made flesh, and that flesh must suffer. In our creation He gave us ourselves, but in our redemption He gave us Himself ; and, by giving Himself for us, gave us ourselves again, that were lost ; so that we are ourselves, and all that we have, twice-told ; and now, what shall we give unto thee, O thou Preserver of men, for ourselves thus given and redeemed ? If we could give ourselves a thousand times over, yet what are we to God ? And yet, if we do give ourselves to Him and His service, such as we are, and such as we can, He accepts it, and will reward it. I will never grudge God His own. I have nothing that is not His ; and if I give it to Him, He will restore it again with interest ; never any man was a loser by God. *Bishop Henshaw.*

We honor God most, we make the fittest requital to Him for His benefits, not by giving to Him, but by receiving from Him. Love wants no return for what it gives or does. God does not show favors in order to receive as much again. He gives because His heart is full of love, because He yearns to bless us. The only requital He wants is the glad acceptance of what He offers. He wants only love in return. Consecration ? Yes, but the consecration of love, and not as recompense or repayment. *J. R. M.*—If we sought to give back some actual return, what should it be which is ours to give or with-

hold, and not already *His* ? But we can gratify the Divine heart with *thanksgiving* and *praise*. With nothing but the gifts we have received there is still the fulness of a loving and thankful spirit we can offer as ours. We can *feel*, we can *speak* our gratitude. We can bring and lay at God's feet, as a free-will offering, that which shall swell the volume of the Divine emotions and minister to the blessedness of the Infinite mind—our poor but honest and hearty thanks. . . . Praise should be a larger element in all our worship, public, social, domestic, and private. We should habitually call to each other in those triumphal chants of Israel's royal harper : " Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord ; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation ! Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms !" *A. L. Stone.*

13. The apostle styeth the sacramental cup the cup of blessing. Here the prophet useth the plural number, thus : " Cup of *salvations*," whereby, after the Hebrew elegancy, he meaneth many deliverances, one after another ; or some great and extraordinary deliverance which was instead of many, or which comprised many under it. *W. Gouge.*—Upon the table of infinite love stands the cup full of blessing ; it is ours by faith to take and partake of it, and then with joyful hearts to laud and magnify the gracious One who has filled it for our sakes that we may drink and be refreshed. We can do this figuratively at the sacramental table, we can do it spiritually every time we grasp the chalice of the covenant, realizing the fulness of blessing which it contains, and by faith receiving its Divine contents into our inmost soul. *S.*

We honor God by taking the full cup of salvation which He commends to our lips, and by calling, while we drink, upon the name of the Lord. Our true response to His Word, which is essentially a proffer of blessing to us, is to open our hearts to receive, and, receiving, to render grateful acknowledgment. The echo of love which gives and forgives is love which accepts and thanks. We have but to lift up our empty and impure hands, opened wide to receive the gift which He lays in them, and though they be empty and impure, yet " the lifting up of our hands is as the evening sacrifice ;" our sense of need stands in the place of all offerings. The stained thankfulness of our poor hearts is accepted by Him who inhabiteth the praises of eternity, and yet delights in the praises of Israel. He bends from heaven to give, and all He asks is that we should take. He only seeks our thankfulness, but He does seek it. And wher-

ever His grace is discerned and His love is welcomed, there praise breaks forth. A. M.

15. *Precious in the eyes of Jehovah (is) the death of His gracious ones (or saints).* In Psalm 72 : 14 the same thing is said of their blood. The word for *death* has the same peculiarity of form as that for *presence* in v. 14, and is construed in the same way with the preposition *to*, *the death to His saints, i.e., the death belonging to them, which they die.* A.

When we have done that we came for it is time for us to be gone. This earth is only made for action, not for fruition ; the services of God's children should be ill-rewarded if they must stay here always. It is our folly that we would have good men live forever, and account it a hard measure that they were. He that lends them to the world owes them a better turn than this earth can pay them. It were injurious to wish that goodness should hinder any man from glory. So is the death of God's saints precious, that it is certain. *Bishop H.*—The Lord values the lives of His saints. They shall not die prematurely ; they shall be immortal till their work is done ; and when their time shall come to die, then their deaths shall be precious. The Lord watches over their dying beds, smooths their pillows, sustains their hearts, and receives their souls. *Almighty God watches over, and sets a high value upon the holy and useful lives of His people,* and will not lightly allow these lives to be abbreviated or destroyed. *The circumstances of their death* are under His special arrangement. Let the weakest believer among you be quite sure, be "confident of this very thing," that He will never suffer your great enemy to take advantage of anything in the manner of your death to do you spiritual harm.

When the saints are dying, the Lord looks upon them, and is merciful unto them. Never does He fail to support by the whispers of His love, by the witness of His Spirit, by the assurance of His presence, by the preparatory revelation of heavenly glory. *W. M. Bunting.*

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints ; precious and also beautiful. It is to them the most blessed of experiences. They are never so well situated to glorify God as in their dying hours. Then they can display the tenderness of His care, the truth of His promises, the supports of His everlasting love, as they can in no other circumstances. While the eye of the body is closing to the beauties of earth, the eye of the soul is opening to the glories that are to be revealed in them ; while their hold of all that life holds dear is relaxing, they cling with a firmer grasp of faith, and a closer

embrace of love, to the things that are unseen and eternal in the heavens ; while the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed more and more. The day of their death is indeed better than the day of their birth, for, rich with all their treasures of spiritual knowledge and experience, the growth and accumulation of a whole lifetime of discipline, they come to their last hour like the mellow fruit that gathers into itself all the life of the tree, and all the dew and sunshine of summer, and at last bends and breaks the branch from which it hangs. *Macmillan.*

In nature's final hour, though the work of human friendship is over, there is another Friend who is busy, and another work which is going rapidly forward in that hushed and shadowy room. With busy but noiseless process the Comforter is giving the last finish to the sanctifying work, and making the heir of glory meet for home, till, at signal given, the portal opens, and even the numb body feels the burst of blessedness as the rigid features smile and say, "I see Jesus," then leave the vision pictured on the pale but placid brow. *Hamilton.*

If there is on earth a spot where His covenant mercies are especially shown, it is the dying chamber. There, when friends have fallen back because they cannot help ; when earthly sights have failed before the glassy eye ; when earthly sounds, even of devotion and love, have ceased to reach the ear ; when the soul almost free from the body is already forsaken of all that is created, a gentle, well-remembered whisper is saying to the inward sense, "I will never, never leave thee ; I will never, never, never forsake thee." And the accomplishment of all is just at the door ; for when the last breath is wasted that spirit, nearer to God than ever before, is rapt forever in the embrace of love, no more to fear, to sorrow, or to sin. Oh, ye who have no God, and who know ye are afraid to die, it is worth your instant labor and importunate prayer ; it is worth toils and sufferings of a lifetime to be prepared for such a departure. This, indeed, is vast and glorious ; but is this all ? Does God conduct His beloved child to the gate of bliss, and then cancel His promise, and abandon it ? Oh, no ! All that precedes is but a single momentary breath before a lifetime. We have arrived at the true birth of the soul. Now it emerges into tracts of endless expansion, where there is no danger, because there is no evil. Perfect holiness is perfect bliss, and both are increasing forever. Now the union of the soul with God, often sighed for, is consummated ; and so shall they "be ever with the Lord." *J. W. A.*

See the yearning love of kindred, the meek humility, the loss of self, the confession of unworthiness, the patient waiting for release, the whispered promises of the New Testament, the lips too faint to speak still moving in prayer, the clear smile and upward look when the glories of the other world begin to shine out and take form as the veil grows thin, the calm parting with the best beloved, the visible light on the face when the name of the Saviour is spoken; the simple phrases, "Christ is all," "Come, Lord Jesus," "Rock of ages, cleft for me," "I know whom I have believed." Either there is reality here, a reality of which faith alone is witness, or there is no reality anywhere; and nature, history, the world, and life, and thought, and time, and love, are all a delusion and a dream! So have the true believers overcome. F. D. H.

I believe that the souls of such as die in the Lord are blessed, and rest from their labors, and enjoy the sight of God, yet so, as they are in expectation of a further revelation of their glory in the last day. *Bacon*.—The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness. O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The dead child of God has grasped the victory and eluded the sting. Neither sorrow nor sighing any more. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The last gasp of earthly air will be followed by the first inspiration of perfect freedom. That is the old doctrine and it is precious. *Interior*.

We think of death ending; let us rather think of life beginning, and that more abundantly. We think of losing; let us think of gaining. We think of parting; let us think of meeting. We think of going away; let us think of arriving. And as a voice whispers, "You must go," let us hear the voice of Jesus saying, "I will come and receive you to Myself." If Jesus comes for us, we do not go forth alone into a world of darkness. We simply go with Jesus into the world of light. *N. Macleod*.—Into that immortal life in those realms above we are to pass when we step beyond the limit of life on earth. Not into the dark of death; oh, no! that is the heathen's fear! into the celestial realms we are to pass if we are Christ's. We shall hear the voices of heavenly hosts; we shall hear heavenly bells chiming as we enter in; we shall catch the echo of seraphic song; we shall meet our friends; perhaps the little child that went away from us will come out to meet us; we shall see the Master and the disciples, and with them we shall be for evermore. R. S. S.—It

is not darkness the Christian goes to at death, for God is light. It is not lonely, for Christ is with him. It is not an unknown country, for Jesus is there; and there the vast company of the just made perfect, who shall be one with Him in the fellowship and blessedness of heaven forever! *C. Kingsley*.

Christ takes us from sin to sinlessness, from perfect weakness to perfect strength, from restlessness to rest, from faith to sight, from cold prayers to the song that ceases not day nor night, from a world lying in wickedness to the just made perfect in sight of the throne. If Christ cannot, or will not do all this for us, then He is nothing to us, and why do we believe on Him? If He can, and will, to die is gain. *Thorold*.—We are only "delivered from this body" by the act of dying; and when Christ is with us, this is all that we mean by dying. That part of our nature which believes in Jesus can never die. Sickness cannot dissolve, nor fever waste, nor fracture mutilate thought, fidelity, and love. *Stanford*.—What have faith, love, aspiration, resignation, fellowship with God to do with death? They cannot be cut through with the stroke that destroys physical life, any more than you can divide a sunbeam with a sword. It unites again, and the impotent edge passes through and has effected nothing. Death can shear asunder many bonds, but that invisible bond that unites my soul to God is of adamant, against which his scythe is turned. Death cannot touch communion, and the consciousness of communion with God is the earnest of the inheritance. A. M.

They that are in God, being united to Him through Christ, can never by any power be separated from Him. Death, that is the great dissolver of all other unions, civil and natural, is so far from untying this, that it consummates it; it conveys the soul into the nearest and fullest enjoyment of God, who is its life, where it shall not need to desire as it were from a distance; it shall then be at the spring-head, and shall be satisfied with His love forever. *Leighton*.—There are few intimations of the condition of the saints departed, but these few breathe of profound repose, tranquillity whose stillness nothing further can disturb. They are "asleep in Jesus." The bodies that arose at the crucifixion were "the bodies of the sleeping saints." They are blessed, "for they rest from their labors." These are the franchised of Christ and of death; dust has returned to dust that the spirit might return unto God; they have died into His eternal life! Such is the story of the dying saint, such his oblivion of the past; his

glory ever growing and gathering for the future ! Such is his entrance into a new world, serene and lofty as the heavens spread above the storms, changeless and eternal as the heart of God. W. A. B.

Religion teaches us to cherish our earthly attachments in the hope that they will be perpetuated in heaven. When the fibres of the soul are woven around the beings who reciprocate its love, its prompting is that they be nurtured for a fairer soil beyond the tomb. Thither we may look amid the endearments of earth, and hope for a higher and more blissful consummation in heaven. Here is the crowning beauty of religion, in the social character. The thought of eternity imparts a grandeur and a depth to the affections in their ordinary exercise. In the trials and anxieties of the domestic circle the thought of heaven will communicate serenity and calmness, and drown each gloomy foreboding. And in those dark hours, when the hearth becomes desolate, and the mourners go about the streets, it is that blessed whisper of the Gospel, "We shall go to them, but they shall not return to us," which assuages the bitterness of grief, and confirms the shattered faith, and inspires the heart with new and holy purposes. *Homer.*

The Lordship of the risen Christ over the living and the dead provides the only solid and satisfactory assurance of the future reunion and recognition of His followers. The question that rises oftener than any other to the lips of the bereaved touches this point of reunion : Shall I see him again, my brother, my child, my friend ? Will the hand that lies there white upon the breast be reached out to me when we meet ? Will the eyes of my mother, whose light opened on me with my life, welcome my coming ? Each dear and trusted face, by some celestial sense will its mysterious meanings and attractions be felt as they were here,

" Lovelier in heaven's sweet climate, yet the same ?"

He who rose and lives again is the Lord of the living and the dead. They are not two families, but one, because they are all in Him. F. D. H.

By the light of faith a Christian traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. The period of their trial is closed ; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is forever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one Head ; and, when He " who is their

life shall appear, they shall appear together with Him in glory." The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, outlive the habitable globe, and form, in all probability, a principal part of the happiness of the blessed. *R. Hall.*

We have great cause to think, by many scriptural expressions, that our heavenly union and communion will be nearer and more extensive, and that *all the glorified shall know each other.* It is a pleasant thought to me, and greatly helps my willingness to die, to think that *I shall go to all the holy ones, both Christ, and angels, and pious separate spirits.* Many are better than one, and the perfect whole than a sinful part, and the *new Jerusalem* is the glory of the creation, God has given me a love to all that are holy for their holiness, and a love to the work of love and praise which they continually and perfectly perform ; and a love to His celestial habitation, to His glory shining there. My old acquaintance with many a holy person gone to Christ make my thoughts of heaven the more familiar to me. And it is no small encouragement to one that is to enter upon an unseen world, to think that he goes no untrodden path, nor enters into a solitary or singular state, but follows all that have passed by death, from the creation to this day, into endless life. Oh how emboldening to consider that I am to go the same way, and to the same place and state with all the believers and saints that have ever gone before me ! I now delightfully converse with my pious friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them forever ; and I take comfort in those that are dead or absent, believing that I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a heavenly love. *Baxter.*

The *personal tenderness* of immemorial attachment shall go along with all spirits, through interminable eras. The redeemed of the earth, known perhaps on all the plains of joy, and at once distinguishable by the specific contour of their celestial forms, shall be companions of eternity. May we not then, while forgetting the imperfections, and the obscurity, and the feebleness, that attach to this present wintry season of the heart, fairly impute to our Christian friendships a value drawn from the treasures of futurity ? This at least is certain, how much soever we may err in matters of particular conjecture, that while earth and its ephemeral interests are hastening to oblivion whatever is Divine, whatever partakes of the nature of the immutable attributes of God, must be indestructible, and must grow until it attains perfection. Every article of human knowledge may be

deemed untrue sooner than this, "That love is of God," and "shall never fail." I. T.

It oftentimes comes that the very tenderest and richest memories of a home are the memories of its sorrows. They are golden chains that bind hearts together in strongest clasp. Then when Christian faith rules in the heart the mementoes of grief and loss become inspirers of new hopes. We are richer for having loved, although we have lost. We are richer, also, for having suffered, if we have suffered with resignation and trust in God. Then we are richer in immortal possessions. Our dead are not lost to us; they have only passed into a higher, fuller, safer life, where they are secure forever from danger and trial, and kept safe, also, for us. *J. R. Miller.*—The sainted dead shall finish for us the blessed work which they began. They tarried with us, and nurtured a human love; they depart from us, and kindle a Divine. Cease, then, our complaining hearts, and wait in patience the great gathering of souls! *Jas. Martineau.*

When we can hold our dead in our hearts without pain, we have recovered them. They ascend, as the Lord did, and sit in our thoughts in heavenly places with Him, calm and bright, and the tender grace of a bygone day puts on also the glory of a day to come. That such a day-spring even here can visit the darkest gloom of trial, let not any mourner doubt who believes that Christ has left His own grave empty and that He will come to open ours. *Ker.*

The dead possess all the consciousness of the living, and much more. We dwell in the suburbs of the eternal city, they are in the kingly metropolis. We are in abasement, they are in the royal chambers of state. We are under clouds, they are in a light so radiant that if it should fall upon us at mid-day, "the earth would seem to suffer an eclipse." *Townsend.*

In the deep sorrow and anguish which come when the tender ties of love are severed, and when the heart in its anguish cries out, "What and where are now my beloved ones?" no answer falls on the listening ear of the heart so full of celestial beauty as this: "They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." That is the final vision; that is the inevitable, fadeless

vision of perfected, long-separated humanity, a new Eden at the end, as Eden was at the beginning of human history. *M. D. Hoge.*

If the mere conception of the reunion of good men in a future state infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully; if an airy speculation—for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions—could inspire him with such delight, what may we be expected to feel who are assured of such an event by the *true sayings of God!* How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth; of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, "with every tear wiped from their eyes," standing before the throne of God and the Lamb *in white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!* What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat and the labor of the way, and to approach, not the house, but the throne of God in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amid the splendor and fruitions of the beatific vision! *Robert Hall.*

16. O Lord, truly I am Thy servant. Thou hast made me free, and I am impatient to be bound again. Thou hast broken the bonds of sin; now, Lord, bind me with the cords of love. I owe my liberty, my life, and all that I have, or hope, to Thy generous rescue; and now, O my gracious, my Divine Friend and Redeemer, I lay myself and my all at Thy feet. *S. Lavington.*—If for us duty is joy, and all our soul's desires flow with an equable motion parallel to the will of God, then there is no sense of restraint in keeping within the limits beyond which we do not seek to go. The willing spirit sets us free, free from the "ancient solitary reign" of the despot self, free from the mob rule of passions and appetites, free from the incubus of evil habits, free from the authority of men's voices and example. Obedience is freedom to them that have learned to love the lips that command. We are set free that we may serve: "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds." We are set free in serving: "I will walk at liberty, for I keep Thy precepts." *A. M.*

Great mercies should engage to great obedience. God begins the Decalogue with a memorial of His mercy in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, "I am the Lord thy God, which

brought thee out of the land of Egypt." How affectionately doth the Psalmist own his relation to God as His servant, when he considers how God had loosed his bonds: "*O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds!*" When we remember what wages we have from God, we must withal remember that we owe more service and more liveliness in service to Him. When we remember that all we have or are is the gift of God's liberality, we should think ourselves obliged to honor Him with all that we have, for He is to have honor from all His gifts. It is a sign we aimed at God's glory in begging mercy, when we also aim at God's glory in enjoying it. It is a sign that love breathed the remembrance of mercy into our hearts, when at the same time it breathes a resolution into us to improve it. It is not our tongues, but our lives must praise Him. *Charnock.*

Love's quality is measured by what it will do, what it will give, what it will suffer. God so loved the world that He gave, gave His only-begotten Son, gave all, withheld nothing. That is the measure of the Divine love for us; it loves to the uttermost. If you are Christ's, every energy of your mind, every affection of your heart, every power of your soul, every fibre of your body, every particle of your influence, every dollar of your money is Christ's, and all of these are to be used to bless your fellow-men and to make the world better and happier. If we love, we will give, we will suffer, we will sacrifice. If we would be like God, we must live to minister, giving our life without reserve to service in Christ's name. *J. R. M.*

The son of Thine handmaid.

David's design here is to represent his piety as hereditary; and he mentions his mother because to her especially, in all probability, his religious convictions and impressions were instrumentally due. If this were the case, how much does the Church owe, under God, to the kindly wisdom of that godly mother, for it is the mother, after all, that has most to do with the making or the marring of the man. For a mother's teachings have a marvellous vitality in them; there is a strange, living power in that good seed which is sown by a mother's hand in her child's heart in the early dawn of the child's being; and there is a deathless potency in a mother's prayers and tears for those whom she has borne, which only God can estimate. *W. L. A.*

18. It is an inconsiderate and foolish haste of Christians to make more occasions of vowing than God doth make for them. Make your vows and spare not, so often as God bids you; but do not do it oftener. Your extraordinary

bond for every ordinary mercy He requires not; He is content with ordinary security of gratitude for ordinary mercies; when He calls for extraordinary security and acknowledgment by giving extraordinary mercies, then give it and do it. *Henry Hurst.*

In the presence of all His people.

Be bold, be bold, ye servants of the Lord, in sounding forth the praises of your God. Wicked men are over-bold in pouring forth their blasphemies to the dishonor of God. Shall they be more audacious to dishonor God, than ye zealous to honor Him? Assuredly Christ will show Himself as forward to confess you, as you are or can be to confess Him. This holy boldness is the ready way to glory. *W. Gouge.*

VERSE 15.

That "the Lord buried Moses" assures us Christians of things more clear, tells us that the dust of God's servants is dear in His sight, and that His hand keeps it safe against the day of the redemption of the body. They may sleep in desert sands or frozen wreaths, in the crowded city or the ocean's bed, "their ashes may fly no marble tells us whither," but His eye watches over them as carefully as it did over this grave, which His own hand, in some mysterious way, formed and closed; and He will bring them forth every one when "He writeth up the people." *Ker.*—The very dust of Christ's saints is dear to Him. He guards their very graves with a deeper and tenderer care than that wherewith earthly affection watches over the spot where a loved one rests. *Caird*—There is no land of *forgetfulness*. The grave is vital now. It is a region of soft and pleasant slumbers. There is an almighty and an omniscient Watcher over all these sleepers. *B. B. E.*

The gloom of the grave *has* been dispelled by the Gospel of our dead and risen Lord. He stands in the place of our beloved. Where He is, they are. What He declares, they would tell us. They speak to us through Him, and if we will but heed the message, our faces will become radiant as we weep. He has made an end of our ignorance, for we know now that death is operative only within and upon the body, incapable of pushing its way into the sanctuary of the soul's life. It is the scaffolding that collapses; the temple remains, and casts its fair outlines against a clearer sky. And He has made an end of our impotence, because in His own resurrection we have the infallible pledge that even the physical power of death is only temporary. *Behrends.*

The taking down of thine earthly tabernacle is in order that it may be set up anew, infinitely more lasting, beautiful, and glorious. Didst thou believe how rich and splendid He intends to make it, which cannot be unless taken down, thou wouldst contentedly endure the present toil and trouble, and be thankful to Him for His care and cost. He takes down thy vile body that He may fashion it like to the glorious body of His own Son. Is it the untying of the knot betwixt body and soul which perplexeth thee? It is true they part; but, as friends going two several ways, shake hands till they return from their journey, they are as sure of meeting again as of parting; so thy soul shall return laden with the wealth of heaven and join its old companion in the participation of all its joy and happiness. *Swinnock.*

One does not, perhaps, fear so much the pains of death as he does the launching out on an unknown sea alone; plunging into darkness, entering into a boundless space where there is nothing tangible, local, or visible, where the soul leaves behind all the warm sympathies of life, all which can communicate with other beings. However fortified by faith, it seems to be a dread experiment. We cling instinctively to some sure support, some familiar surrounding objects. But is it not a thought full of comfort that, to the believer his Redeemer stands at the very threshold of death, the other side of that thin curtain which hides mortality from life; stands there, not as an impalpable vision, but as a dear friend, with His heart overflowing with human sympathies? It is like meeting on a foreign shore our best earthly friend, perfectly familiar with the language and all the objects there, a guide most intelligent, most faithful, who will anticipate every desire, and in whose society we find the sweetest contentment, and the largest accessions of knowledge and delight. *B. B. E.*

Though you see not the world to come that you are passing to, yet as long as you know that you are in the hands of Love itself, what cause have you of disquiet or distrust? Moreover you know that He is wise as well as good, and almighty as well as wise; and, therefore, as He meaneth you no harm (if you are His children), so He will not mistake nor fail in the performance. You need not fear lest your happiness should miscarry for want of skill in Him that is omniscient, or for want of will in Him that is your Father, or for want of power in Him that is omnipotent. You may far better trust God with your lives than yourselves, for you have not wisdom enough to know what is best for

you, nor skill to accomplish it, nor power to go through with it; nay, you love not yourselves so well as God doth love you. *Baxter.*

Our view of death will not always be alike, but in proportion to the degree in which the Holy Spirit is pleased to communicate His sensible influence. We may anticipate the moment of dissolution with pleasure and desire in the morning, and be ready to shrink from the thought of it before night. But though our frames and perceptions vary, the report of faith concerning it is the same. The Lord usually reserves dying strength for a dying hour. When the time shall arrive which He has appointed for our dismissal, He will overpower all our fears, and give us a comfortable, triumphant entrance into His kingdom. *Newton.*

Christ Within the Veil.

Jesus is our High-Priest. He has not gone far away, though He has gone to heaven. He is only within the veil (Heb. 6 : 19). And hence we know that heaven itself is very near us. Death is not "a leap in the dark," or a long journey to some far-off sphere. It is only going through the veil which God draws aside for us. This was Paul's idea, for he writes of "being absent from the body and present with the Lord," as if the body itself was the veil, and the moment he was out of it he would see his Lord. If we could realize that Christ is just within the veil, that He is near to us though we cannot see Him, and that death is merely following Him in passing through, that it is the transition of a moment, we would not shrink, as many of us do, from that transition. An eloquent writer says: "A veil is the thinnest and frailest of all conceivable partitions. The veil that hides heaven from our eyes is only our embodied existence, and though fearfully and wonderfully made, it is only wrought out of our frail mortality. In a bound, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in the throb of a pulse, in the flash of a thought, we may start into disembodied spirits, glide unabashed into the company of great and mighty angels, pass into the light and amazement of eternity, know the great secret, gaze upon splendors which flesh and blood could not sustain, and which no words lawful for men to utter could describe. Brethren, there is but one step between you and what lies behind that curtain; between you and heaven there is but a veil."

How solemn and yet how interesting is our position in this life, with only a veil between us and heaven! Suppose that we were in the palace of some earthly monarch, that there was a

curtain across the apartment in which we stood, that we knew it was transparent to those on the other side, and that the king and all his court were there. They could see all that we did. They could hear all that we said. Any moment the curtain might be drawn aside, and we find ourselves in their midst! Such is our mortal life, and yet how unconcerned we live. Paul writes to the Ephesians about the "whole family in heaven and earth," and tells them that God has gathered together in one all things in Christ, "both which are in heaven and on earth." There are not two worlds, but one, with a curtain separating the inhabitants for a time. The kingdom of God is here as truly as it is up there. It is the same temple, though there is a veil between the holy place and the holy of holies. And our High Priest is not only near us in the upper sanctuary, but He is there "for us," there waiting to welcome us. When the time comes for us to depart, His nail-scarred hand will draw the veil aside, and His voice will say, "Come unto Me. Come and be with Me where I am, that ye may behold My glory." *Interior.*

The Thought of Death Salutary and Helpful.

As Christian believers we should cherish the thought of death: as coming, in regard to its time and circumstances, in accordance with the appointment of our loving, heavenly Father; as in itself the personal coming of Jesus to take us unto Himself; as terminating the experience of painful toil, temptation, sin, and grief, and as ushering us into a boundless, endless life of holy activity and joy. This is the direction our thought should take if we would rationally and properly contemplate it. And such thought of death may prove one of the best *preparatives for all the events and duties of life*. Rightly cherished and justly applied, that thought touches and healthfully affects every possible experience through which we pass. It stimulates to Christian activity, while it instructs us in the wisest, best modes of that action. It perpetually utters in low, deep, earnest tone, "Work while it is called day." It chastens our too earnest pursuit of things lawful, of this world's interests, pursuits, and pleasures by reminding us that the "fashion of this world," all that is connected with the world, passeth away. It checks that proneness to inordinate, immoderate attachment even to the beings whose lot is linked most closely and tenderly to us by the remembrance that the links will all one day be broken. It enables us to hold all the good that God gives us with an easily loosened grasp by bringing into view the richer, better blessings He holds in re-

serve. It sustains us, too, in trial and adversity; stays us under the little discomforts which wear so constantly and deeply upon us; moderates excessive grief, and enables us to abide patiently under all disquiet and affliction by the soothing assurance that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And it leads us habitually to strive after holiness in heart and life, after an increasing conformity to the Divine character; to seek first and supremely that kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, by reminding us that the sublime end of our being is to awake in the perfect likeness of God, to live forever in the unrestrained possession of a kingdom, a fellowship, and service of inconceivable purity, glory, and blessedness. B.

The State of the Blessed Dead. In the first place, it is one of uninterrupted and unclouded personal consciousness. This is involved in the fact of the soul's essential independence of its mortal body and of its personal immortality; and it is confirmed by our Lord's assurance to the dying thief that on that very day they would meet in Paradise. Not for one moment, then, is the thread of conscious personal identity broken. The soul is not put to sleep, nor relegated to a dreamy condition, nor thrown into a state of suspended animation. It does not retreat to a second and longer infancy. It is not thrown back upon itself, existing for an indefinite period in a state of ecstasy. It remains in the full possession of all its essential powers. The intellect, the sensibilities, and the will continue in undiminished energy and activity. They are neither diminished nor dormant. The soul carries with it all that it has gained here in knowledge and affection and holy experience. It is not so absorbed in its new pursuits, but there come times of retrospection and reminiscence, when memory floods the heart and moves to prayer and praise. For myself, I doubt not in the least that my sainted mother, whose face vanished from my sight nearly forty years ago, thinks of me and prays for me as really and tenderly as I think of her, though I do not pray for her. And this I must believe, because death neither destroys nor diminishes the power of memory.

In the second place, the mental and spiritual capacities of the sainted dead are greatly enlarged and intensified. They are said to be at rest, with Christ, and in Paradise. They are at rest, because forever freed from the infirmities of their mortal state, delivered from the shackles of a diseased and dying body; without heart-

ache, or headache, or handache. They are with Christ, in a higher fellowship and activity than was their privilege here. There was more power in the one day of Pentecost than in all the thirty-four years of our Lord's mortal ministry. One hour of Paradise is worth more than a lifetime on earth, though prolonged to fourscore years. Knowledge is clearer and more comprehensive. Love is more intense and holy. Joy is deeper. Activity is more varied and refreshing.

In the third place, the life of the sainted dead is a life of wide and holy and happy fellowships. They are all with each other, because they are all with Christ. They constitute a great, compact, and blessed community from which all sin and discord are excluded. For them the battle has forever ended, and eternal felicity has begun. Who can picture the happy surprises, the joyful greetings, the earnest conferences, the jubilant songs, the resounding hallelujahs, the praises and the prayers of that innumerable host, among whom the Christ walks as King, and whose own name He has written on their foreheads? O Paradise of God! how my heart doth long and beat for thee!

But your poor heart cries out: "Am I, then, forgotten in this flood of joy?" Forgotten? No! a thousand times, *No!* They know you are coming, though they know not when; and at every knock upon the death portals they wonder whether you have come. They know you are coming, nor will you need to wait for them long when your heart has ceased its beating, and your surprises under their loving guidance will be a new joy to them. They know you are coming, coming from toil and tears to

rest and gladness; from loneliness and heart-aches to blessed fellowships and a Divine guidance. Your coming will increase their blessedness. For they are not perfect without us. On Thanksgiving day, in many of our homes, the children and grandchildren come from near and far to renew the greetings of the early time. Each new arrival is greeted with a shout, with hurrying feet, and hearty grasp, and joyful tears, and merry laughter, and uncounted kisses. But only when the last guest has been welcomed, and has exchanged his dusty garments for the robe of feasting is the grace spoken and the meal begun, while the homestead rocks upon the waves of joy! We shall all wait for each other. So the apostle declared, when he said that at the sounding of the trumpet we shall *all be caught up together* to meet the Lord in the air, and to be forever with Him. Together shall we mount from Paradise to the City of God; for Paradise is only the vestibule where the increasing host is rapidly marshalling to enter at last in solid ranks, with radiant faces, and unfurled banners, and shouts that rend the skies, the city of pearly gates and of golden streets. The final coronation is one for which they that have preceded us shall wait, until we all shall have joined them, when God's work on earth shall have been done, and time shall be no more. There is to be a last death-bed, as once there was a first. And when the last grave shall have been filled, while the bereaved perchance stand about it in chastened grief and hope, the great and eternal transfiguration shall chase away the night forever.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! *Behrends.*

PSALM CXVII.

- 1 O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations;
Laud him, all ye peoples.
- 2 For his mercy is great toward us;
And the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever.
Praise ye the LORD.

Praise Jehovah, all ye peoples,
Laud Him, all ye nations!
For His grace is mighty over us,
And Jehovah's truth *endureth* for ever,
Hallelujah.

D.

THIS, the shortest of all the Psalms, is a hallelujah addressed to the heathen world. In many Hebrew mss. it is made the close of Psalm 116 or the commencement of Psalm 118.

But precisely in its brevity it is one of the grandest witnesses to the might with which, in the midst of the Old Testament, the universal calling of the religion of revelation is under-

mining the national barriers. The call is based upon the might of Jehovah's grace, which proves itself mighty over Israel, *i.e.*, superabundantly covering human sin and weakness by its intensity and fulness; it is also based upon His truth, in virtue of which history even on into eternity issues in the verifying of His promises. Grace and truth are the two Divine powers which are one day to reveal and disclose themselves fully in Israel, and are from thence to conquer the whole world. D.

1. There is a great deal of Gospel in this Psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it (Rom. 15 : 11), where he quotes it as a proof that the Gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them, when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, *Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud Him, all ye people.* H.

This is an exhortation to the Gentiles to glorify Jehovah, and a clear proof that the Old Testa-

ment spirit differed widely from that narrow and contracted national bigotry with which the Jews of our Lord's day became so inveterately diseased. The nations could not be expected to join in the praise of Jehovah unless they were also to be partakers of the benefits which Israel enjoyed; and hence the Psalm was an intimation to Israel that the grace and mercy of their God were not to be confined to one nation, but would in happier days be extended to all the race of man. S.

2. Mercy, truth. These two great attributes of God, as manifested to Israel, "*toward us*," are to be the subject of praise for the heathen, an indication of those wider sympathies which appear to have manifested themselves after the exile. Hence the first verse is quoted by Paul (Rom. 15 : 11, together with Deut. 32 : 43), "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people," as showing that in the purpose of God the Gentiles were destined to be partakers, together with the Jews, of His mercy in Christ. P.

PSALM CXVIII.

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD ; for he is good :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let Israel now say,

That his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say,

That his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 Let them now that fear the LORD say,

That his mercy *endureth* for ever.

5 Out of my distress I called upon the LORD :
The LORD answered me *and set me* in a large place.

6 The LORD is on my side ; I will not fear :
What can man do unto me ?

7 The LORD is on my side among them that help me :

Therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.

8 It is better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man

■ It is better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.

10 All nations compassed me about :

In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.

11 They compassed me about ; yea, they compassed me about :

In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.

12 They compassed me about like bees ; they are quenched as the fire of thorns :

In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.

13 Thou didst thrust sore at me that I might fall :

But the LORD helped me.

14 The LORD is my strength and song ;
And he is become my salvation,

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous :

The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted :

The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

17 I shall not die, but live,

And declare the works of the LORD.

18 The LORD hath chastened me sore :

But he hath not given me over unto death.
 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness :
 I will enter into them, I will give thanks
 unto the LORD.
 20 This is the gate of the LORD :
 The righteous shall enter into it.
 21 I will give thanks unto thee, for thou hast
 answered me,
 And art become my salvation.
 22 The stone which the builders rejected
 Is become the head of the corner.
 23 This is the LORD's doing ;
 It is marvellous in our eyes.
 24 This is the day which the LORD hath made ;
 We will rejoice and be glad in it.
 25 Save now, we beseech thee, O LORD :

O LORD, we beseech thee, send now prosper-
 ity.
 26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of
 the LORD :
 We have blessed you out of the house of
 the LORD.
 27 The LORD is God, and he hath given us
 light :
 Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the
 horns of the altar.
 28 Thou art my God, and I will give thanks
 unto thee :
 Thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
 29 O give thanks unto the LORD ; for he is
 good :
 For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

WHAT the close of Psalm 117 says of God's truth, that it endureth forever, the beginning of Psalm 118 says of grace, its sister. It is the closing Psalm of the *Hallel*, which begins with Psalm 113. It was Luther's favorite Psalm : his beautiful *Confitemini*. He occupied himself in the loneliness of his Patmos with the exposition of this his noblest jewel, his defence and treasure. D.

This is my Psalm, my chosen Psalm. I love them all ; I love all Holy Scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart, and I have a peculiar right to call it mine. It has saved me from many a pressing danger, from which nor emperor, nor kings, nor sages, nor saints could have saved me. I am not jealous of my property ; I would divide it with the whole world. And would to God that all men would claim the Psalm as especially theirs ! It would be the most touching quarrel, the most agreeable to God, a quarrel of union and perfect charity. *Luther.*

The ideal speaker, throughout the Psalm, is Israel, as the Church or chosen people. The deliverance celebrated cannot be identified with any one so naturally as with that from the Babylonish exile. A.—It is evident that this Psalm was designed to be sung in the temple worship, and was composed for some festal occasion. Its general character, and the many passages in it borrowed from earlier writers, render it probable that it is one of the later Psalms, and we may assume that it was composed after the return from the captivity. The most probable conclusion is that the Psalm was composed for the first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, after the completion of the second temple (Neh. 8). P.

The Psalm falls into two divisions. The first division (vs. 1–19) is sung by the festive procession which is led up by priests and Levites, and which goes up to the temple with sacrificial animals. With v. 19 the procession stands at the entrance. The second part (vs. 20–27) is sung by the body of Levites who receive the festive procession. Then v. 28 is the answer of those who have arrived, and v. 29 the concluding song of all of them. D.

1–4. His covenant mercy is the burden of these first four verses. Neither is there any idle repetition, but a notable expression of the saints' insatiableness of praising God for His never-failing mercy. These heavenly birds having got a note, sing it over and over. In the last Psalm there are but six verses, yet twelve hallelujahs. A. *Wright.*

2. It is as if he had said, the reason for thus urging man to praise Jehovah is because His mercy endureth forever, and oh that Israel would join in affirming this reason. *Oh that Israel would say (I will give thanks), for His mercy endureth forever.* A.

5. *The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place.* It may be rendered, *The Lord answered me largely* ; as He did Solomon when He gave him more than he asked for ; and as He does His people when He gives them a sufficiency and an abundance of His grace ; not only above their deserts, but above their thoughts and expectations. *Gill.*—What a large place is that in which the great God has placed us ! All things are ours, all times are ours, all places are ours, for God Himself is ours ; we have earth to lodge in and heaven to dwell in—what larger place can be imagined ? S.

6. *I will not fear : what can man do unto me ?*

Let him do his worst—frown, threat, plot, arm, strike ; the Lord is on my side, He hath a special care for me, He is a shield unto me ; I will not fear, but hope ; as it is in the next verse, “ I shall see my desire on them that hate me,” I shall see them changed or ruined. Our help is in the name of the Lord, but our fears are in the name of man. *W. Greenhill.*

7. Literally, “ The Lord is *for* me or *to* me as mine own God. What can man, frail man of the earth do unto me,” protected by such a Defender ? “ The Lord is *for* me *with* my helpers,” and “ I shall look upon my haters,” *i.e.*, look down upon them fearlessly. *C.*

7-9. During the building of the temple the Jewish people had experienced this helpful assistance of Jehovah in opposition to the enmities of the Samaritans and the satraps ; and at the same time they had also learned that trust in Jehovah proves true, and that trust in man, on the contrary, and more especially in princes, is deceitful ; for under Pseudo Smerdis the work begun under Cyrus and brought under suspicion even in the reign of Cambyses was interdicted. But under Darius the interdict was removed ; Jehovah showed that He can dispose secular events and the hearts of men to the advantage of His people. *D.*

8. It is better because man is weak, but God is Almighty ; because man is selfish, but God is benevolent ; because man is often faithless and deceitful, God never ; because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be, but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death, where God cannot assist us ; and because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to the present life, the power of God will be commensurate with eternity. *Barnes.*—Oftentimes God bleseth not means, because we are so apt to trust in them, and rob God of His glory, not waiting for a blessing at His hands. This causeth the Lord to cross us and to curse His own benefits, because we seek not Him, but put confidence in outward means. *A. Wright.*

This eighth verse of this Psalm is the middle verse of the Bible. There are, I believe, 31,174 verses in all, and this is the 15,587th. Though we may generally look upon such calculations as only laborious idleness—and they certainly have been carried to the most minute dissection of every part of Scripture—yet I believe that the integrity of the holy volume owes a vast deal to this scruple-weighting of these calculators. Whatever their reasons were, I cannot

but think that there was an overruling Providence in thus converting these trifling and apparently useless investigations into additional guards and fences around the sacred text. *Bouchier.*

9. *It is good to confide in Jehovah* (more) *than to trust in nobles.* This merely strengthens the foregoing declaration, by rendering it more specific and emphatic. The Lord is more to be confided in, not merely than the mass of men, but than their chiefs. *Nobles* is a better translation than *princes*, because it keeps up the association with the adjective sense *noble*, generous, liberal, spontaneous, which is otherwise lost sight of. Even the Persian patrons and protectors of the Jews had not deserved their confidence in comparison with Jehovah their covenanted God. *A.*

12. In Eastern countries it was common to burn over their fields in the dry time of the year, and thus to clear them of thorns and briars and weeds. Of course, at such a time they would kindle quickly, burn rapidly, and soon be consumed. So the Psalmist says it was with his enemies. *Barnes.*

14. *The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.* “ *My strength*,” that I am able to resist my enemies ; “ *my salvation*,” that I am delivered from my enemies ; “ *my song*,” that I may joyfully praise Him and sing of Him after I am delivered. *W. Nicholson.*—Good songs, good promises, good proverbs, good doctrines are none the worse for age. What was sung just after the passage of the Red Sea is here sung by the prophet, and shall be sung to the end of the world by the saints of the Most High. *Plumer.*

15, 16. The great event in special view was God’s hand uplifted to take them out of their bondage in Babylon and bring them safely home to their fatherland. There was abundant reason for magnifying this glorious “ right hand.” *C.*

15. Tents. We can imagine with what special force the words (of this verse) would come to those who then were, or had but recently been, keeping their Feast of Tabernacles, dwelling in the temporary huts which they constructed of the branches of the olive and the fir-trees, the myrtle, and the palm, and rejoicing in the great deliverance which God had given them. *Plumptre.*

The voice of joy and the acclamations of genuine and holy pleasure were heard in that “ Tabernacle of the righteous ;” and nowhere else. Could any one dare affirm that it was *joy* that dwelt in the temples of the demon-gods of

Philistia, Phœnicia, Syria, Assyria, Egypt, or that filled the courts of Chemosh, of Ashtaroth, of Dagon, of Baal, of Mithra? What did the grove conceal? Lust — blood — imposture. What sounds shook the fane? alternate screams of anguish and the laughter of mad votaries. What was the priest? the teacher of every vice of which his god was patron and exemplar. What were the worshippers? the victims of every woe which superstition and sensuality can gender, and which cruelty can cherish. It was not then a blind national prejudice, it was not spiritual arrogance that made the prophet and poet of Israel exult in the distinction of his people. He turned toward the hill of God, the habitation of Jehovah, graced then, perhaps, with the solemn joys of its annual feasts. "Thither the tribes had gone up," from the glens of the vine and olive, from the valleys of corn—of milk, and honey—they had advanced "from rest to rest," and every one, every head of the thousands of Israel, was then "appearing before God in Zion." The harp and the viol were heard there; and the tabret and cymbal—"stringed instruments and organs"—the responsive anthem also, which taught as much as it cheered the people. And in sight of all, the smoke of the propitiatory sacrifice ascended direct to heaven—innocent sacrifice! The priest made intercession for the people "within the veil;" but that veil concealed no shame, no cruelty, no fraud; he came forth charged with a blessing, in the pregnant terms of which were condensed more of sacred science than all the rest of the world beside possessed. The congregation dispersed, and as they returned to their inheritances the joy of the Lord was their strength. I. T.

17. *I shall not die but live, and recount the works of Jehovah.* The existence thus to be preserved is that of Israel, and the last clause describes the final cause of that existence, which is here stated as a ground of confidence, and is elsewhere urged as an argument in prayer. The original construction of the first clause is, *I shall not die, for I shall live.* A.

While there is a testimony for God to be borne by us to any one, it is certain that we shall not be hurried from the land of the living. The Lord's prophets shall live on till they have uttered all the words of their prophecy; His priests shall stand at the altar unharmed till their last sacrifice has been presented before Him.

18. *The Lord hath chastened me sore.* This is faith's version of the former passage, "Thou hast thrust sore at me;" for the attacks of the

enemy are chastisements from the hand of God. The devil tormented Job for his own purposes, but in reality the sorrows of the patriarch were chastisements from the Lord. "Chastening, Jehovah hath chastened me," says our poet. Chastisement is sent to keep successful saints humble, to make them tender toward others, and to enable them to bear the high honors which their heavenly Friend puts upon them. "*But He hath not given me over unto death.*" They are "chastened, but not killed;" their pains are for their instruction, not for their destruction. By these things the ungodly die, but gracious Hezekiah could say, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." S.

19. The gates of righteousness.

The gates of the temple are so called with reference to the service of God and the character He requires of His worshippers. This is evident from the next verse, "*The righteous shall enter into it.*" The demand "open to me" may be understood either literally, in which case it is best explained as the words of the singers in the festal procession when they reach the temple gates; or figuratively, as implying the readiness and alacrity with which the Psalmist will go to the house of God, there to offer his sacrifices and to utter his thanksgivings. Compare Isa. 26:2: "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation may enter in," where righteousness is made the condition of entrance into "the strong city," or God's building, as here into the holy place. P.

21. The Psalmist says, "*I will praise Thee: for Thou hast heard me;*" he praised not only because he had *received*, but also because he had been *heard*—because the living God, as a hearing God, was manifested in His mercies. And when we know that God has heard us, let us not delay our praise; God loves a quick return for His blessings; one sentence of heartfelt thanksgiving is worth all the formalism of a more labored service. P. B. Power.

22. *The stone (which) the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.* This is a proverbial expression, and as such applicable to any case, in which what seemed to be contemptible has come to honor. This mode of expressing the idea was most probably suggested by the founding of the temple. The sight of the stone, or the act of laying it, would be sufficient to suggest the proverb, and its application to the happy change experienced by Israel, so lately blotted from the list of nations, and regarded by the heathen as unworthy even of an humble place in the proud fabric of consolidated empire,

but now restored not only to a place but to the highest place among the nations, not in point of power, wealth, or worldly glory, but as the chosen and peculiar people of the Most High God. As this Psalm was sung by the people at the last Jewish festival attended by our Saviour, He applied this proverb to Himself, as One rejected by the Jews and by their rulers, yet before long to be recognized as their Messiah, whom they had denied and murdered, but whom God had exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins (Acts 5:31). This, though really another application of the proverb in its general meaning, has a certain affinity with its original application in the verse before us, because the fortunes of the ancient Israel, especially in reference to great conjunctures, bore a designed resemblance to the history of Christ Himself, by a kind of sympathy between the body and the head. Even the temple, which suggested the original expression, did but teach the doctrine of Divine inhabitation, and was therefore superseded by the advent of the Son Himself. *The head of the corner* means the chief or corner-stone of the foundation, even in Zech. 4:7, where it is translated *head-stone*. The application of the verse before us made by Christ Himself (Matt. 21:42) is renewed by Peter (Acts 4:11). A.

In the primary meaning of the Psalm the illustration seems to have been drawn from one of the stones—quarried, hewn, and marked away from the site of the temple (Kings 6:7)—which the builders, ignorant of the head architect's plans, had put on one side, as having no place in the building, but which was found afterward to be that on which the completeness of the structure depended, that on which, as the chief corner-stone, the two walls met and were bonded together. The Psalmist saw in this a parable of the choice of David to be king over Israel; perhaps, also, of the choice of Israel itself out of the nations of the world. Elsewhere, as in Eph. 2:20, and in the language of later ages, Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone. *Ellicott*.

Israel had been despised by their heathen masters, but now, by the good hand of their God upon them, they had been lifted into a place of honor. They, rejected of men, were chosen of God as a chief stone of that new spiritual building which Jehovah was about to erect; the temple of the world, the foundation of which was to be laid in Zion. In Matt. 21:42-44 (Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17) our Lord applies the words of this and the next

verse to Himself. The quotation was, it would seem, purposely taken from the same Psalm from which the multitude had just before taken their words of salutation (see on vs. 25, 26), as they went forth to meet Him and conduct Him in triumph into Jerusalem. But there is more than an application of the words. Israel is not only a figure of Christ; there is an organic unity between Him and them. Whatever, therefore, is true of Israel in a lower sense, is true in its highest sense of Christ. Is Israel God's "firstborn son"? the name in its fulfilment belongs to Christ (Matt. 2:15); if Israel is "the servant of Jehovah," he is so only as imperfectly representing Him who said: "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." If Israel is the rejected stone made the head of the corner, this is far truer of Him who was indeed rejected of men, but chosen of God and precious; the corner-stone of the one great living temple of the redeemed, whether Jews or Gentiles. Compare Eph. 2:20. The passage which forms the connecting link between this Psalm and the New Testament quotations is Isa. 28:16, "Behold, it is I who have laid securely in Zion a stone, a tried, precious corner-stone, most securely laid: he that believeth (*i.e., resteth thereon*) shall not flee (through fear of any evil)." In this passage the Messianic reference is still more direct. In marked contrast with this, it is said of Babylon (Jer. 51:26): "They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for a foundation." P.

Whatever was the occasion of the Psalm, Jesus lays His hand on it and claims it as speaking of Him. Lower, typical meanings it no doubt had, and was rooted in some unknown historical fact; but for us its meaning is fixed by Him. There are other prophecies about the foundation-stone, and the stone cut out without hands, which are all smelted together here, to teach the one great truth, that Jesus Christ is the foundation (and, subordinately, that He is the bond of union between the two divergent walls, which represent Jew and Gentile) laid by God; and though rejected by those to whom the task of building up God's house had been intrusted, still is in history and fact what He was from of old intended to be. The husbandmen's killing of the Son is not the end of the Son. God's purpose works through opposing agents, and is accomplished by apparent defeat. If, then, opposition is futile, judgment is sure. What can become of the builders who flung the foundation-stone aside, when it is set in its place? Nothing but destruction. So our

Lord's last words give grave warning to us all, and declare the universal law regulating the relations to Him of all men who hear the Gospel. A. M.

23. Now all this "*is the Lord's doing*," done without any intervention on the part of man, and therefore, "*it is wonderful in our eyes*." For who is there that must not look upon it as a wonderful thing to find a man crucified, dead and buried, rising, after three days, from the dead, immortal, with unbounded power, and declared Prince of men and angels, and a way opened through Him for mortal man to the kingdom of heaven, to the society of the angels, to a happy immortality? *Bellarmino*.—It never ceases to astonish us, as we see, even here below, God by means of weakness defeating power, by the simplicity of His Word baffling the craft of men, and by the invisible influence of His Spirit exalting His Son in human hearts in the teeth of open and determined opposition. It is indeed "*marvellous in our eyes*." In the Hebrew the passage reads, "*It is wonderfully done*;" not only is the exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth itself wonderful, but the way in which it is brought about is marvellous; it is wonderfully done. S.

24. *This is the day Jehovah has made, we will rejoice and triumph in it.* By the day we are here to understand the happier times which Israel, through God's grace, was permitted to enjoy. This day He is said, as the Author of this blessed revolution, to have made, created. In a still higher sense the words may be applied to the new dispensation, as a glorious change in the condition of the Church, compared with which the restoration from captivity was nothing, except as a preliminary to it and a preparation for it. A.

Compare this place with Matt. 21 : 22, 23 and Acts 4 : 11, and you will find that the preceding verses are a prophetic prediction of Christ's resurrection, and so this verse foretells the Church's joy upon that memorable and glorious day. *Swinnoek*.—Of the day on which Christ rose from the dead, it may with more propriety than of any other day be affirmed, "*This is the day which the Lord hath made*." Then it was that the rejected stone became "*the head of the corner*;" a morning then dawned which is to be succeeded by no evening. *Bishop Horne*.—There was no day before; it was not day to an apostate and darkened creation till the Sun of righteousness rose on it in His strength; and His rising was virtually the rising from the dead. *Melville*.

This, therefore, is "the day which the Lord

hath made," higher and brighter than all days; the day on which our Lord rose again, on which He acquired a new people by the Spirit of regeneration, on which He filled the minds of all with an exulting joy. This day of Christ's resurrection is life to the dead, pardon to sinners, glory to saints; since by working virtue in men it raises them from the depths, places them on high, perfects the righteous, confirms the doubtful, condemns the unbelieving. For it was to this end that our Lord rose again, that He might show to us an image of the future resurrection. Let us, therefore, be glad and rejoice on this day, on which Christ by His resurrection overthrew death and brought in salvation. *Augustine*.

The whole of this Psalm applies to Jesus the Messiah, and so we ask, What was the day in His life which He made His own beyond all others? The day of days in Christ's life was the day of resurrection. And the resurrection should provoke a joy in Christian hearts greater than any other event in the life of our Lord. For it is the joy of a great certainty. The resurrection of our Saviour is the fact which makes an intelligent Christian certain of the truth of his creed and the reality of his salvation. It is the joy of a great hope. The resurrection sets before us the completeness of our life after death. As the apostle says, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." The resurrection of Christ has quickened and expanded our perceptions of the unseen and of the future. The hope of meeting those we have loved and lost, the hope, above all, of seeing and being welcomed by Him, their Lord and ours, who in His human body is set at God's right hand, this glorious, most inspiring hope springs directly from the resurrection morn. And we may exclaim that God has "begotten us again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." H. P. L.

It may very fitly be understood of the Christian Sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted; and so, First, here is the doctrine of the Christian Sabbath; *It is the day which the Lord has made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; He has made it for man, it is therefore called *the Lord's day*, for it bears His image and superscription. Second, the duty of the Sabbath; the work of the day that is to be done in His day. *We will rejoice and be glad in it*; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the

occasion of it, Christ's becoming the *head of the corner*. This we ought to rejoice in both as His honor and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who, having instituted a day for His service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy. H.

—On this day we are called to rejoice in that sure and certain prospect which the resurrection of Christ affords to all true believers, of ascending with Him to heaven, and of there partaking with Him of His glory. As He was the substituted representative of true believers, what was accomplished in Him at His resurrection will ere long be accomplished in them; the victory over death which He acquired He will impart to them; the glory which He has received He will give to them; the eternal rest into which He has entered at His ascension He hath prepared for them. *R. Hall.*

Observe it with a free, loving, jubilant spirit, saying, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What is wanted is neither a latitudinarian nor a Pharisaic Sabbath; but a blessed, joyous, hallowed, Christian Sabbath; a peaceful, serene day of rest; a Sunday of free and fervent consecration to God's worship, of spiritual culture and growth, and of deeds in the service of our fellow-men. *J. H. Martin.*

25. *Ah, now, Jehovah, save, we beseech Thee! Ah, now, Jehovah, prosper, we beseech Thee!* The circumlocution, *we beseech Thee*, is the only form in which the force of the supplicatory particle can be expressed, without the risk of its being mistaken for an adverb of time. The whole phrase, *save, we pray*, became a standing formula of supplication with reference to great public interests or undertakings, and reappears in the New Testament under the form *Hosanna*. See Matt. 21 : 9, where we find it, in the acclamations of the multitude, combined with other expressions from this same Psalm which they were accustomed to sing at their great festivals. A.

The English word "now," repeated in each member of this verse, is not a particle of *time*, but a particle of *entreaty*, as in Eccl. 12 : 1, "Remember, I beseech thee, thy Creator." B.—The word "now" is best translated, "Save, I pray." These two Hebrew words are transferred (not translated) into our version in *Hosanna*, as in Matt. 21 : 9, where the multitudes who preceded and followed our Lord in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem seized upon the very words of this passage. No words could have been more appropriate. Of Him

pre-eminently was it said in this prophecy (v. 26), "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (See Matt. 23 : 39.) "He that should come," the great "coming One," became His special designation, as we see in Matt. 11 : 3; John 6 : 14; 4 : 25. Compare also Malachi 3 : 1.

27. The mighty God ("El") is our "Jehovah," in the sense of our faithful, covenant God; He hath shed upon us this glorious prophetic light as to "Him that cometh in the name of the Lord." Now, therefore, bind the sacrificial animal with cords and lead him safely up to the horns of the altar. The sense is not, Tie him to the horns of the altar, but lead him bound up to the very altar, there to be offered in sacrifice. There is no emphasis on horns as distinct from the altar itself. It is only a poetic definiteness, for the sake of stronger impression. C.—Our knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ came not by the light of nature, nor by reason, nor did we receive it of men; but the mighty God alone hath showed it to us. Therefore, unto Him be all the honor of our enlightenment. S.

Showed us light : bind the sacrifice.

Here is somewhat received; somewhat to be returned. God hath blessed us, and we must bless God. His grace and our gratitude are met in the text; let them as happily meet in your hearts, and they shall not leave you till they bring you to heaven. *T. Adams.*—The sacrifice we are to offer to God in gratitude for redeeming love is ourselves; not to be slain upon the altar, but "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12 : 1) to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound "with cords to the horns of the altar." H.

Nothing short of complete self-surrender, perfect obedience, and unwavering, unflinching love can characterize the walk that corresponds with our profound obligations to Him. Surely there can be no stronger cord with which to bind us as sacrifices to the horns of the altar than the cords of love. This is the unique glory and power of Christian ethics, that it brings in this tender personal element to transmute the coldness of duty into the warmth of gratitude. Repugnant duties become tokens of love, pleasant as every sacrifice made at its bidding ever is. The true Christian spirit says, Thou hast given Thyself wholly for me; help me to yield myself to Thee. Thou hast loved me perfectly; help me to love Thee with all my heart. A. M.

28. God. The original for "*God*" gives force to this passage, Thou art my "*El*"—the Mighty One; therefore will I praise Thee; my "*Eloah*"—a varied form with substantially the same sense, "and I will extol Thee"—lift Thee high in glory and honor. C.

29. *O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.* The Psalm concludes as it began, making a complete circle of joyful adoration. We can well suppose that the notes at the close of the loud hallelujah were more swift, more sweet, more loud than at the beginning. To the sound of trumpet and harp, Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that feared the Lord, forgetting their distinctions, joined in one common hymn, testifying again to their deep gratitude to the Lord's goodness, and to the mercy which is unto eternity. What better close could there be to this right royal song? S.

VERSE 15. *The Voice of Rejoicing and Salvation is in the Tents of the Righteous.*

Add to all other sources of joy *another*, and the craving of the immortal nature is filled. It is the conviction, fastened in the soul by God's unalterable promise, that the new life which is begun is a principle that can never be extinguished, that the new relations of adoption, childship with God, can never be sundered, that the new home can never be broken up, the inheritance never fail or be lessened by the enjoyment. And this, too, is God's own assurance, upon which as completing all possible or conceivable sources of delight, He bids us, "Rejoice evermore!" Upon His covenant, well-ordered, sure, and *everlasting*, the believing

soul rests expectant. He knows that all things shall work together for good here and forever, that all things of this and the coming life are *His*, by a pledge that cannot be broken. The good work begun in the soul will be completed. The new life *once* begotten by the Spirit, the life *once* hid with Christ in God will be perpetuated, with all its blessed fruits, by the same Divine power, so long as the life of the Godhead is perpetuated. So long as the Father endures shall the child endure, sharing all the joy of the Father's home and heart. So long as the Son remains enthroned King shall His redeemed dwell in His presence, rejoice in His love, and share His throne. So long as holds the might of the Infinite new-creating Spirit, shall the spirits of the just He has made perfect be held in faultless being, with every energy of thought and will and affection full strung in holy activity. So long as the Godhead lives, reigns, acts, God's children shall love and obey, God's redeemed ones shall praise, God's sanctified ones shall serve. So long, even to everlasting, shall God Himself dwell with them and in them as their exceeding glory and joy. *Then rejoice evermore*, ye who, through God's grace and by His promise, hold in your hearts such sources of joy! Let the voice of joy and rejoicing be in the tabernacles of the righteous. Rejoice that to you there is no longer condemnation! Rejoice that you are the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, to the inheritance that is incorruptible and unfading. Rejoice in your comfort and your toil. Rejoice even in tribulation, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Might it brings to you to do or to bear. Heed, then, His bidding, who bids you rejoice evermore. B.

PSALM CXIX., 1-16.

VERSES 1-16.

■ ALEPH.

- 1 BLESSED are they that are perfect [or, *up-right*] in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.
- 2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,
That seek him with the whole heart,

- 3 Yea, they do no unrighteousness;
They walk in his ways.
- 4 Thou hast commanded *us* thy precepts,
That we should observe them diligently.
- 5 Oh that my ways were established
To observe thy statutes!
- 6 Then shall I not be ashamed,
When I have respect unto all thy commandments.

- 7 I will give thanks unto thee with upright-
ness of heart,
When I learn thy righteous judgments.
8 I will observe thy statutes :
O forsake me not utterly.

2 BETH.

- 9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his
way ?
By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.
10 With my whole heart have I sought thee :
O let me not wander from thy command-
ments.

- 11 Thy word have I laid up in mine heart,
That I might not sin against thee.
12 Blessed art thou, O LORD :
Teach me thy statutes.
13 With my lips have I declared
All the judgments of thy mouth.
14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testi-
monies,
As much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate in thy precepts,
And have respect unto thy ways.
16 I will delight myself in thy statutes :
I will not forget thy word.

THE one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is the appropriate sermon, after the Hallel, on the text which is its epitome (Psalm 1 : 1, 2), "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly ; but his delight is in the law of the Lord." Except in two verses (122, 132), the law is expressly extolled in every verse. *Fausset*.—God has not only commanded us to learn ; He has promised to teach. He who wrote the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm knew that well, and therefore his Psalm is a prayer for teaching and a prayer for light. *C. Kingsley*.

This is the longest and the most elaborate of the alphabetical Psalms. It is arranged in twenty-two stanzas, according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza is composed of eight verses, each verse consisting of two members only, and each beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. Thus each of the first eight verses begins with the letter Aleph, each of the next eight with the letter Beth, and so on throughout the alphabet. The great subject of the Psalmist's praise is the law of God. In this respect the Psalm may be said to be an elaborate expansion of the latter part of Psalm 19. The date of the Psalm cannot be fixed with anything like certainty, though it may probably be referred to a time subsequent to the return from the Babylonish captivity. The law of which he speaks as his daily study, as his delight and his counsellor, must obviously have been the written law, and it may be inferred that it was now in the hands of the people. Whether this was the case to any extent before the exile, we have now no means of ascertaining. After the exile, copies of the Scriptures were multiplied. The efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah, which were directed in the first instance to the collection of the sacred books (2 Macc. 2 : 13), must have been di-

rected eventually to their dissemination. Accordingly, we find that copies of the "books of the law," or of "the book of the covenant," were in the possession of the people at the time of the Maccabees (1 Macc. 1 : 55, 56). P.

It is inconceivable that such a Psalm as this could have been written if there had not been at the time a code of laws in existence which were commonly acknowledged as of Divine origin and authority. The law of Moses was such a code, and there is no trace of any other. At the time then when the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm was written this code must have been in existence. The Psalm itself is at once a witness to it and the creation of it. Moreover, the spiritual character of the Psalm shows that the writer was imbued with the spirit of Deuteronomy, or the second law. It is no mere ceremonial rites that he will observe, but the requirements of Him who demanded the circumcision of the heart. Had the first four books of Moses alone existed, it is scarcely too much to say that the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm could not have been written ; another element must have operated in its production, which was the influence of the latest words of the great Lawgiver. *Leathes*.

To the design of popular instruction, and especially to that of constant repetition and reflection, the Psalm is admirably suited by its form and structure. The alphabetical arrangement, of which it is at once the most extended and most perfect specimen, and the aphoristic character, common to all alphabetic Psalms, are both adapted to assist the memory, as well as to give point to the immediate impression. It follows, of course, that the Psalm was rather meant to be a storehouse of materials for pious meditation than a discourse for continuous perusal. At the same time, the fact of its existence in the Psalter is presumptive proof that

it was used in public worship, either as a whole, or in one or more of the twenty-two stanzas into which it is divided, corresponding to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, all the eight verses of each paragraph beginning with the same Hebrew letter. A.

The things contained in Scripture and drawn from it are here called, First, God's *law*, because they are enacted by Him as our Sovereign. Second, His *way*, because they are the rule both of His providence and of our obedience. Third, His *testimonies*, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. Fourth, His *commandments*, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. Fifth, His *precepts*, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. Sixth, His *Word*, or saying, because it is the declaration of His mind, and Christ the essential, eternal Word is all in all in it. Seventh, His *judgments*, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. Eighth, His *righteousness*, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. Ninth, His *statutes*, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. Tenth, His *truth*, or *faithfulness*, because the principles upon which Divine law is built are eternal truths. *Henry*.

According to this alphabetical series of eight stanzas, the Word is the source of happiness to those who walk by it (*aleph*), of holiness to those who give heed to it (*beth*), of truth to those whose eyes the Lord opens by His Spirit (*gimel*), of law to those whose heart He renews (*daleth*), begets perseverance by its promises (*he*), reveals the mercy and salvation of the Lord (*vau*), awakens the comfort of hope in God (*zayin*), presents the Lord as the portion of the trusting soul (*cheth*), makes affliction instructive and chastening (*teth*), begets a fellowship in the fear of God (*jod*), and a longing for the full peace of salvation (*kaph*), is faithful and immutable (*lamed*), commands the approval of the heart (*mem*), is a light to the path (*nun*), from which to swerve is hateful (*samek*), warrants the plea of innocence (*ayin*), is a testimony to God's character and will (*pe*), is a law of rectitude (*tsade*), warrants the cry for salvation (*qoph*), and prayer for deliverance from affliction (*resh*), and from persecution without a cause (*shin*), and assures of an answer in due time (*tau*). There is here as much order as could be expected in a long alphabetical acrostic. M.

In the German translation of the Bible it has

the admirable title: The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, virtue, and usefulness of the Word of God; for here there is set forth in inexhaustible fulness what the Word of God is to man, and how man has to bear himself in relation to it. D.—This Psalm is a prolonged meditation upon the excellence of the Word of God, upon its effects, and the strength and happiness which it gives to a man in every position. These reflections are interspersed with petitions, in which the Psalmist, deeply feeling his natural infirmity, implores the help of God for assistance to walk in the way mapped out for him in the Divine oracles. In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable Psalm, we must, like its author, have learned to love and practise the sacred Word. For this Psalm is in some sort a touch-stone for the spiritual life of those who read it. *A. de Mestral*.

I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated as in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the Psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. God's law—that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature—is all along represented as the great object of the love, the complacency, and the rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments "above gold, yea, the finest gold;" and to which they are "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." *Edwards*.

The constant repetitions found in this and other Psalms has formed a source of perplexity to many. Is it not accounted for by the fact that they stand as the pre-eminent interpreters of the heart? Truth repeated in statement grows old and wearisome, truth repeated in experience is forever new and interesting. Hence the necessity of repetitions. The sense of sin, of the Divine love, longing or aversion, hope or fear, returns to the heart from time to time, and with every return the heart is moved by a repetition of its experience and led to a repetition of its utterance. Christian shame and penitence, and Christian joy and hope never grow old. The saved will not weary of crying through the heavenly ages, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," because at every repetition of the song, there will throb in the heart the renewed feeling of gratitude and joy that called it forth at the

first. So this and other Psalms simply speak for the soul, touched again and again by each of a thousand influences from within and without, and responding under every impulse with a renewed expression of its experience. The child's nature in a thousand different circumstances and connections cries, "I love you, I love you," and the father never wearies of the words. So it may speak repeatedly of its father's strength or goodness—one utterance is not enough. Heart language is always tautological. *Anon.*

It is strange that, of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind chiefly repulsive—the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God. *Ruskin.*

1. Blessed. The Psalmist beginneth with a description of the way to true blessedness, as Christ began His Sermon on the Mount, and as the whole Book of Psalms is elsewhere begun. Blessedness is that which we all aim at, only we are either ignorant or reckless of the way that leadeth to it, therefore the holy Psalmist would first set us right as to the true notion of a blessed man, "*Blessed are the perfect in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.*" *Manton.*

In the way. They are blessed who are in the way, not a way, any chance or uncertain road, but "the King's Highway;" that path which the Lord Himself has declared to us, saying, "I am the way." *Hilary.*—In this way there must be no standing, sitting, or reclining, but *walking*, so that all our movements may be regular, going on unto perfection. *Geier.*

Blessedness is ascribed to *walking* in God's way. If we have not the habit of doing anything, we do it with difficulty and are ready to cease from doing it. Thence it is that the saints find their estate miserable till they form the habit which maketh them with facility and constancy *walk* with God. They count it of all things most blessed to have attained some degree of permanent habit in godliness. *P. Bayne.*—He who walks in God's law walks in God's company, and he must be blessed; he has God's smile, God's strength, God's secret with him, and how can he be otherwise than blessed? *S.*

2. Testimonies. The Word of God is called His testimony, not only because it testifies His will concerning His service, but also His favor and goodwill concerning His own in Christ Jesus. If God's Word were no more

than a law, yet were we bound to obey it because we are His creatures; but since it is also a testimony of His love, wherein as a Father He witnesseth His favor toward His children, we are doubly inexcusable if we do not most joyfully embrace it. *W. Cowper.*

Keep His testimonies. Faith, which is the reliance on a person and therefore trust in his word, passes into both forms of confidence in the word as promise and obedience to the word as command. We cannot cut faith in halves, and exercise the one aspect without the other. Some people's faith says that it delights in God's promises, but does not delight in His commandments. That is no faith at all. Whoever takes God at His word will take all His words. There is no faith without obedience; there is no obedience without faith. *A. M.*

Seek Him. There is so much said about men seeking pardon, and seeking peace, and seeking acceptance with God that we are apt to fall into a belief that these are in themselves the ultimate ends of our religion. But the Bible never represents them in that light, nor does it dwell upon them. It brings them forward as means to an end. Having found these inestimable blessings, we are not to rest there; there is something higher and better to which they are designed to lead us. In them we lay the foundation of the Divine life, but they are not that life itself. That life is in God, and it is only as we seek Him with our whole heart that we can enjoy that life. *W. L. A.*

Love makes long service short and hard service easy. Nothing is pain which love does. And this is Gospel obedience. It is faith working by love which refines duty into grace—the commandments are exalted into privileges—the ordinances become happy means of fellowship with God. The believer meets God in them, and by free converse he exercises and improves his love. He draws near to God, and God draws near to him in prayer, in praise, in hearing the Word, and the Lord's Supper, and in all Sabbath duties. In these ways God manifests His gracious presence, and the believer rejoices in it. God communicates His grace, and the believer receives it with thankfulness. *W. Romaine.*

3. They do no unrighteousness—that is, they make not a trade and common practice thereof. Slip they do, through the infirmity of the flesh, and subtlety of Satan, and the allurements of the world; but they do not ordinarily and customably go forward in unlawful and sinful courses. *Greenham.*—

To the *doing of iniquity* these three things must concur: First, a purpose to do it; next, a delight in doing it; thirdly, a continuance in it; which three in God's children never concur; for in sins done in them by the old man, the new man makes his exceptions and protestations against them. It is not I, says he; and so far is he from delighting in them, that rather his soul is grieved with them. In a word, the children of God are rather sufferers of sin against their wills than actors of it with their wills, like men spiritually oppressed by the power of their enemy; for which they sigh and cry unto God, "Miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And in this sense it is that the apostle saith, "He who is born of God sinneth not." *W. Cowper.*

They walk in His ways. Habitually, constantly, characteristically. They are not merely honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men; but they walk in the ways of God. *Barnes.*

4, 5. *Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently* (v. 4); this is God's imperative, "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" (v. 5); this should be our optative. *T. Adams.*—We are bound to obey the commands of God whether we can or not. What, then, remains for us but to return the mandate to heaven, accompanied with an earnest prayer that the Lord would write upon our hearts those statutes to which He requires obedience in His Word? "*Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy statutes diligently.*" We acknowledge, Lord, our obligation, but we feel our impotency. Lord, help us; we look unto Thee. "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" *Bridges.*

5. "O that my ways were directed"—but the Hebrew word means *established, confirmed*—a very suitable thing to pray for. He longs to attain fixed, settled habits, in which his ways should, as the word suggests, become *solid* in the right. *C.*

The apprehension of spiritual realities, in their beauty and glory, does not come all at once, but it infallibly comes in the course of Christian experience. And not more truly and earnestly does the blind man express the topmost wish of his heart, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" than the believer his longing, "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" *J. W. A.*

6. Most men perhaps can look at some of the precepts with comparative freedom from reproach. But who can so look unto them all?

Yet this, also, the godly heart aspires to. In this verse we find the Psalmist consciously anticipating the truth of a word in the New Testament, "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." *Marchant.*—Such as are Christians indeed *exercise themselves, with Paul, to keep a good conscience in all things toward God and men.* They have a regard unto all God's commandments, as David speaks, they have a sincere love to God, which makes them study the exactest obedience they can reach. And this is an imperfect kind of perfection; it is evangelical but not angelical. *L.*

Such is the mercy of God in Christ to His children, that He accepts their weak endeavors, joined with sincerity and perseverance in His service, as if they were a full obedience. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that He will pardon thy worst. David knew this Gospel indulgence when he said, "*Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments,*" when my eye is to all Thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or toward the place he is going to, though he be as yet short of it; there he would be, and he is putting on all he can to reach it; so stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience; such a soul shall never be put to shame. *Gurnall.*

7. I will praise Thee when I shall have learned. There is no way to please God entirely and sincerely until we have learned both to know and do His will. Practical praise is the praise God looks after. By learning he means his attaining not only to the knowledge of the Word, but the practice of it. For otherwise, if we get understanding of the Word; nay, if we get it imprinted in our memories, it will do us no good without practice. *Manton.*

Learned Thy righteous judgments. We see here what David especially desired to learn—namely, the Word and will of God; he would ever be a scholar in this school, that learning to know, he might remember; remembering, might believe; believing, might delight; delighting, might admire; admiring, might adore, adoring, might practise; and practising, might continue in the way of God's statutes. This learning is the old and true learning indeed, and he is best learned in this art who turneth God's Word into good works. *Greenham.*

Let us have it as one of our most sacred duties, to the Bible, not to use it so as to shut ourselves and all that have it away from God's immedi-

ate revelation by it. The external, verbal revelation is not given to be a substitute for the internal and immediate, but to be a guide into that. We are to find God after all by an immediate knowledge ourselves, just as all the older saints have found Him, only with an immense help in the Bible, which they had not. We are not to know God simply as reading the Book, and living thus on a mere second-hand knowledge. That is making a fence of the Book, requiring us to get all light from it, and not from God. No, the Bible is received only when it is spiritually discerned; that is, when it brings us in where God is, to know Him by our faith and love, and have Him in a first-hand knowledge, even as Abraham had, or Job, or Jethro, or Cornelius. The Bible tells us how others found Him, that we may find Him also. We only know Him by an immediate knowledge, even as they did. If we use the Book only for the second-hand knowledge it gives us, we even make a barrier of it, and put God farther away. The right use of it will not give us notions about God, but God Himself. It will make God nigh, and make it felt that He is nigh, both to ourselves and to others, present to knowledge, pressing into knowledge in all human breasts. Little do we conceive how very nigh He is, and how He is pressing in, through the Bible, through nature, everywhere and always, to be known by every human creature in the world. *Bushnell.*

Cultivate spiritual sympathy with the Bible; it is a spiritual Book. It is full of rich historical color, it abounds in curious facts and striking characters, and has an immense wealth of allusion to phenomena of nature and of human life; but all is pervaded by a supreme and controlling spirituality. Other things are very desirable for a just interpretation of Scripture. Spiritual sympathies, genuine and ever freshly cherished, are indispensable. *J. A. Broadus.*

8. Instantly upon forming his resolution, he recollects that the performance of it is beyond the power of human strength, and therefore the next moment he follows it with prayer, "*I will keep Thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly.*" *Bridges.*—The spiritual life of believers may be at a stand, and sin may break out, but they are not utterly forsaken. One way or other, God is still present; present in light sometimes when He is not present in strength, when He manifests the evil of their present condition so as to make them mourn under it; and present in awakening their desires, though not in giving them enjoyment. As long as there is any esteem of God He is not yet gone; there is

some light and love yet left, manifested by our desire of communion with Him. *Manton.*

9. **A young man.** A prominent place—one of the twenty-two parts—is assigned to young men in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm. It is meet that it should be so. Youth is the season of impression and improvement, young men are the future props of society, and the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, must begin in youth. The strength, the aspirations, the unmarred expectations of youth are in requisition for the world; oh, that they may be consecrated to God. *J. Stephen.*—God justly claims the first and the best. And is it not a most affecting proof of the alienation of the heart from God, that the youth of man, the bloom and freshness of his mind, should naturally be devoted to the service of sin? *Bridges.*

Taking heed thereto. God's Word will not do without our watchfulness and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large, or by no rule at all, or choosing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet and walk by Scripture rules; so their way shall be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and forever. *H.*—There is an especial necessity for this "*Take heed,*" because of the proneness of a young man to thoughtlessness, carelessness, presumption, self-confidence. There is an especial necessity for "*taking heed,*" because of the difficulty of the way. "*Look well to thy goings;*" it is a narrow path. "*Look well to thy goings;*" it is a new path. "*Look well to thy goings;*" it is a slippery path. "*Look well to thy goings;*" it is an eventful path. *J. H. Evans.*

Let him "take heed to his way, according to God's Word." Let him begin to meditate upon this Word as the rule of the Divine government; he will soon see the necessity of that mediatorial and restorative process which is brought to light in the Lord Jesus, "the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." Let him then go on, from time to time, putting away everything that he feels to be wrong, trying to conquer every bad habit, and to regulate his conduct by God's Word; and he will be led to rejoice in the sanctifying Spirit, who shall carry on this work. But it is no use for you to pretend to desire the pardon of sin and reconciliation by the blood of Christ, if you do not put away every evil thing, and seek to "cleanse your way, according to God's Word." The two things must advance together—the

putting away everything practically wrong and the seeking after that truth which is according to God's Word. *Binnie.*

If at that season when our youth are preparing their minds for guiding affairs, by courses of early discipline in public schools, and those of second rank are entered to the various professions of life, if then no pains be taken to draw their attention to the sacred writings, and impress principles of piety and virtue upon their minds, how can it be expected that religion should even have a chance? One cannot always be learning; youth is for learning, manhood for acting, and old age for enjoying the fruits of both. The future lawyer, physician, or statesman is studying, each that he may prepare for filling a reputable station in the present world. Why is the future immortal not at the same time studying the two Testaments of God, in order to prepare for the world to come, in which every one of us hath a more valuable stake? If immortality be neither the dream of fond enthusiasts nor the trick of artful priests, but the revelation of the righteous God, then let us have the literature and the science, and the practice for the long after-stage of our being, as well as for the present time, which is but its porch. *Irving.*

10. With my whole heart sought Thee. God looks not at the fulness of words and variety of expressions, but at the sincerity and devotion of the heart. Let but the matter of thy prayer be according to God's mind, holy and warrantable, and the temper of thy heart humble and fervent, and no fear but thou shalt speed. Yea, let the prayer be old, pray to-day what thou didst yesterday, be but sure to bring new affections with thy old prayer, and thou shalt be friendly received into God's presence, though thou canst not on a sudden put thy requests into a new shape. God will not shut His child out of doors, because he comes not every day in a new-fashioned suit. *Gurnall.*

Let me not wander. The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for His grace to prevent our wanderings. *H.*

11. To "hide in the heart" is not to conceal away even from his own view, but the very opposite; to put it in his memory, where it will be ever present and ready to guide his affections and purposes, and to rule his life. *C.*—Laid up in the heart the Word has effect. The lay-

ing of it up in the mere memory will not avail. The Word must be known and prized, and laid up in the heart. Then the threatenings, the promises, the excellencies of God's Word, and God Himself realized, the young man would be inwardly fortified; the understanding enlightened, conscience quickened—he would not sin against his God. *Stephen.*

As soon as one touches a Gospel, he at once brings his mind into better order. But if there be added to this a careful reading, then his soul is purified and becomes better, while God converses with it through those writings. The reading of the Scriptures is a great preservative against sin, whereas ignorance of the Scriptures is a great precipice, a deep abyss, and to know nothing of the Divine law is altogether to throw away one's salvation. It is this which has generated heresies, which has brought in a corrupt life, which has turned everything upside down. For it is impossible, quite impossible, that any one should go away without benefit who reads Scripture habitually and attentively. *Chrysostom.*—It is not enough for you to have a choice sentence of God's Word written upon the walls of your churches; but let God's law be written in your hearts and consciences, and practised in your lives, that all the world may see you live as men dedicated to the true God. *Jenkyn.*

12. What is the connection of thought between these two clauses? Perhaps this, Thou, Lord, art infinitely blessed in Thy purity, Thy benevolence, in the perfection of Thy entire moral nature. Oh, lead me upward to that same moral perfection! It is the noble purpose of Thy revealed law to bring Thy moral creatures up to Thine own standard of purity. Oh, help me to realize this purpose in my heart and life! *C.*—God cannot be unreal or remote to any who have learned to see, in the Bible, not a book of theology nor a volume of history, but a vital, throbbing, personal communication from our Father in heaven, full of infinite tenderness and wisdom, able to meet our daily spiritual requirement; inexhaustible and therefore Divine. God's consolations cannot be small with those who have found the master key to this golden treasury of life and inspiration and peace. *J. H. Barrows.*

14. The way of Thy testimonies. The "way" of God's testimony is the practice of His Word, the doing of that which He hath declared to be His will, and wherein He hath promised to show us His love; and in very deed, the only cause why we find not the comfort that is in the Word of God is that we prac-

tise it not by walking in the way thereof.
W. Cowper.

A child of God is delighted in obedience and in conformity to His Word. "I have rejoiced in the way of His testimonies as much as in all riches," not only in the testimonies themselves—in the naked contemplation of these blessed truths—but in the way and practice of these things. He that loves His rule will study an exact conformity thereto. The true believer finds his delight when he can copy out the Word of God and transcribe it as the moral image of his God into his heart. *Salter.*

All riches. These are the only riches within the reach of all. If we are poor in this world, it is the Lord's providence. If we are poor in grace, it is our own fault. "Things present and things to come;" something enjoyed and much more expected; the mercies of eternity added to the blessings of time; the riches of both worlds are all assured to him by the covenant of grace "*in the way of the Lord's testimonies.*" But the riches of God's testimonies only rejoice the heart when they are uppermost there.

15. I will meditate in Thy precepts.

Rejoicing in the testimonies of God will naturally flow in an habitual meditation in them. The thoughts follow the affections. C. B.—He who has an inward delight in anything will not long withdraw his mind from it. To some men meditation is a task; to the man of cleansed way it is a joy. He who has meditated will meditate; he who saith, "I have rejoiced," is the same who adds, "I will meditate." S.

The Hebrew word here translated "meditate" signifies properly to speak or converse with one's self. Hence it conveys the idea of seclusion, retirement, solitude, and, at the same time, of mental activity. In meditation the mind retreats within itself; but it retreats thither to think, to ponder, to reflect. Meditation rivets Divine truth in the memory. Meditation on Divine things makes them really profitable to us. Meditation gives depth, seriousness, and earnestness to our religious profession and character. Religion, whatever else it is, is a mode of thought; and hence it is only as deep and earnest thoughtfulness is bestowed upon it that it can be developed in its higher and nobler forms. W. L. A.

The end of study is information, and the end of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections. Study is like a winter sun, that shines, but warms not; but meditation is like a blowing up the fire, where we do not mind the blaze, but the heat. The end of study is to

hoard up truth; but of meditation to lay it forth in conference or holy conversation. *Manton.*—It is not the bee's touching on the flowers that gathers the honey, but her abiding for a time upon them, and drawing out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most on Divine truth, that will prove the choicest, strongest Christian. *Bishop H.*

It probably is true of a great many regular readers of the Bible, that they lapse into a formal way of going over the chapters, one by one, and fail to drink in the spirit and deep meaning of the inspired words. Regular reading of the Scriptures is to be encouraged, of course. Every day ought to include an allotted time for communion with God, through the reading of His blessed Book and through private prayer. But regularity may be mechanical, or it may be full of life and enthusiasm. When one reads simply to cover so many verses each day, as if he were discharging an obligation, his regularity becomes mechanical and unprofitable. It is when one goes to the Bible daily to find something that he wants—goes as a searcher after the good things of God—and considers the meaning of what he reads with a lively and yet reverent interest, that he reads with profit and with sincere pleasure. A man, who has found the Bible to be the most interesting and helpful book in his house, states that he developed interest in it by reading one verse a day, at first, but he studied that verse in all its bearings and sought to discover its peculiar meaning for him. In this, as in other spiritual concerns, those who seek shall find. *Interior.*

For some daily portion, large or small, read, marked, and inwardly digested, you are bound to find time. Business has no right to interfere with a duty as plain as that of obedience to parents or of abstinence from profanity. To give to anything the time necessary for this, is to render unto Cæsar the thing that is God's. There is far too great readiness on the part of Christians to excuse themselves from this duty on the ground of preoccupation; and their Christian lives starve for just this reason. They are spiritually lean and barren because they are not fed on the Word; and their leanness tells disastrously upon the fair heritage of the Church, as the seven thin and blasted ears consumed the seven full ones. None will go to the work of the day without the morning meal. But too many think nothing of plunging into the day's cares and toils without a morsel of the bread which cometh down from heaven. God will not nourish you with other bread because you have no leisure to taste of the "an-

gels' food" He so freely gives you. And you may depend upon it that the time taken for the careful study of a portion of God's Word, taken from business, if need be, will be more than made up by the wellspring of blessing which that truth shall set running in your heart, to cheer and to refresh you when your burdens are heaviest. *Vincent.*

As we drift along the swift, relentless current of time toward the end of life, as days and weeks and months and years follow each other in breathless haste, and we reflect now and then for a moment that, at any rate for us, much of this earthly career has passed irrevocably, what are the interests, the thoughts, ay, the books, which really command our attention? What do we read and leave unread? What time do we give to the Bible? No other book, let us be sure of it, can equally avail to prepare us for that which lies before us; for the unknown anxieties and sorrows which are sooner or later the portion of most men and women; for the gradual approach of death; for the passage into the unseen world; for the sights and sounds which then will burst upon us; for the period, be it long or short, of waiting and preparation; for the throne and the face of the eternal Judge. Looking back from that world, how shall we desire to have made the most of our best guide to it! how shall we grudge the hours we have wasted on any, be they thoughts or books or teachers, which only belong to the things of time! *Liddon.*

I will have respect. The one is the fruit of the other, "*I will meditate*;" and then, "*I will have respect.*" Meditation is in order to practise; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience, "Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. 1:8). *Manton.*—*I will have respect unto Thy ways*, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavors to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purposes, unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them. *H.*

16. Surely those who are serving Him in this happy, filial walk are not likely to "*forget His Word.*" As the eye is continually turned to the object of its affection, so the eye of the soul, that has been fixed with *delight* on the ways of God, will be habitually resting upon them. As a wise heathen observed, "I never

yet heard of a covetous old man, who had forgotten where he had buried his treasure." The reason is abundantly evident. His heart is in it. *C. B.*—Delight preventeth forgetfulness; the mind will run upon that which the heart delighteth in; and the heart is where the treasure is. Such instructions as we take in with sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. *Manton.*

After all these thousands of years of the world's existence, after all splendors of literature in all the nations and in all ages, there is no book in the whole world which can supersede the Bible as an instrument for the education of the young. After all these millenniums it remains the most uniquely glorious book which the world has ever known. Alone of all books it is circulated in hundreds of millions of copies in every tongue spoken by man; its eclipse would be the return of chaos; its extinction would be the epitaph of history. "Its light," says Cardinal Newman, "is like the beauty of heaven in all its clearness, its vastness like the bosom of the sea, its variety like the scenes of nature." Perhaps testimony from a religious teacher might be regarded as purely official. Let me, then, quote the testimony of an eminent living man of science; the testimony of a man like Professor Huxley on this subject will, at least, not be suspected. "I have been seriously perplexed to know," he says, "how the religious feeling which is the essential basis of conduct can be kept up without the use of the Bible. The pagan moralists lacked fire, and life, and color, and even the noble Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. For three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history. It forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of the great past stretching back to the farthest limit of the oldest nations of the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized or made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary interspace between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of this and of all time, according to his efforts to do good and to hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their daily work?" *Farrar.*

* Blessed book, bright as heaven when the sun has dissolved the clouds; beautiful as earth

when the summer has clothed it with flowers ; wondrous book, now all music, now all judgment ; a fountain in the wilderness, a shadow of a great rock in a weary land, an infinite provision for the soul's infinite hunger ; not a man-made book at all, but quite full of God, throbbing with God, burning with God, awful, solemn, sublime with God. Other books come and go, but this book stands forever, because the world forever reads it. *Anon.*

"If we be ignorant," said the translators of 1611, "the Scriptures will instruct us ; if out of the way, they will bring us home ; if out of order, they will reform us ; if in heaviness, comfort us ; if dull, quicken us ; if cold, inflame us." *Tolle lege, Tolle lege* ; take them and read, take them and read. Only beware how you read. Read as a scoffer, read as a Pharisee, and it will be useless. Read rightly, and then the Bible will be a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your path. Read teachably, read devotionally. The saving knowledge of Scripture is a science not of the intellect, but of the heart. Read, above all, as Christ taught us to read, not to entangle yourselves in the controversial or the dubious, but go to the very heart of the central significance. But read it in humility and in love, and then no Urim which the priest wore has ever gleamed with such lessons as it will reveal to you. However much it may be mingled with mystery which we are not required to unravel, and difficulties which we are not able to solve, the Bible contains plain teaching for men of every rank of soul and every state in life, and which, so far as they honestly and implicitly obey, they will be happy and innocent to the utmost powers of their nature, and capable of victory over all adversities, whether of temptation or of pain. For in the Holy Scriptures you find the secrets of eternal life, and they are they which testify of Jesus Christ. *Farrar.*

Bible Study. Bible reading may be an important element in Bible study, but is not in itself the study of the Bible. Bible memorizing has its incidental advantages to one who would have the words of Scripture always available ; but Bible memorizing is never in itself Bible studying, nor is it even, like Bible reading, an important element in Bible study. Familiarizing one's self with the contents of the Bible so as to be able to locate the text of any historic fact or special teaching, requires a certain

measure of application in study ; but it can hardly be called in itself Bible study. A careful analysis of the various books of the Bible, with a view to showing their date and authorship and immediate purpose of writing, together with an exhibit of their peculiarities of style and subject-matter, calls for patient investigation and demands a large measure of intellectual acumen ; but all this knowledge may be mastered without touching the great truths of those books, which are of chiefest importance to him who would know and use the Bible aright. Tracking the use of a particular word or phrase throughout the Bible record, in proof of a presupposed duty or doctrine, without discriminating between the different meanings of that word or phrase in different connections, may be a means of Bible study that is not Bible study. Text-collating is not by any means the true study of texts.

Bible study may include any or all of these methods, but it must include something beyond them all in order to be true Bible study. There is a sense in which the Bible is like any other book, in being made up of words that must be noted in their connection and uses, and that therefore it is to be studied like any other book in order to arrive at its meanings. But there is another sense in which the Bible is unlike all other books, in that it contains God's peculiar message to mankind through men whom He trained and inspired for that special purpose, and that therefore its study must be mainly for the ascertaining and understanding of the Divine truths that, unlike any other book, it has for ourselves as we are in our present needs and our ultimate destiny. Except for this difference in methods and objects of study, the Bible study of the baldest rationalist and of the most frigid agnostic is as much of a help toward truth as the Bible study of the warmest-hearted and most trustful Christian believer. No Bible study looks to the proper end of Bible study that does not seek to ascertain just what lesson it is that God would have this student gain from the passage immediately under study ; and no student of the Bible has yet profited by his Bible study unless he is thereby helped toward truer completeness of manhood as a disciple of Christ. It is well enough to become familiar with the structure and contents of the different books of the Bible, and to memorize as many portions of it as there is time and mental strength for ; but all this is but an incident to true Bible study, and not the thing itself. Bible study is for the purpose of gaining impulses and helps to the Christian life. *H. C. T.*

PSALM CXIX., 17-32.

VERSES 17-32.

1 GIMEL.

- 17 DEAL bountifully with thy servant, that I may live ;
 So will I observe thy word.
 18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold
 Wondrous things out of thy law.
 19 I am a sojourner in the earth :
 Hide not thy commandments from me.
 20 My soul breaketh for the longing
 That it hath unto thy judgments at all times.
 21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed,
 Which do wander from thy commandments.
 22 Take away from me reproach and contempt ;
 For I have kept thy testimonies.
 23 Princes also sat and talked against me :
But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.
 24 Thy testimonies also are my delight
And my counsellors.

7 DALETH.

- 25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust :
 Quickened thou me according to thy word.
 26 I declared my ways, and thou answeredst
 me :
 Teach me thy statutes.
 27 Make me to understand the way of thy pre-
 cepts :
 So shall I meditate of thy wondrous works.
 28 My soul melteth for heaviness :
 Strengthen thou me according unto thy
 word.
 29 Remove from me the way of falsehood :
 And grant me thy law graciously.
 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness :
 Thy judgments have I set *before me*.
 31 I cleave unto thy testimonies :
 O LORD, put me not to shame.
 32 I will run the way of thy commandments,
 When thou shalt enlarge my heart.

17. Bountifully. Remembering what a weak, empty, and helpless creature the most experienced believer is in himself, it is not to be conceived that anything short of a *bountiful* supply of grace can answer the emergency. Standing as we do upon such high and sure ground, it is equally dishonorable to God, and impoverishing to ourselves, to ask only a little of Him. Rather let us, according to His own command, "open our mouths wide, and He will fill them." C. B.

That I may live. Life is, *therefore*, a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world. "Not *that I may live* and grow rich, live and be merry ; but *that I may live and keep Thy Word*, observe it myself, and transmit it to those that shall come after, which, the longer I live, the better I shall do." H.

18. "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see." He asks for no new revelation. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. He asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. *Ker.*—The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord, make a plainer law, but Lord, *open*

mine eyes ; blind men might as well complain of God that He doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The Word is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1 : 19). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts. *Manton.*

Two forms of Divine teaching are implied in these words : Revelation and spiritual apprehension to receive that which is revealed, truth in the written Word and the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, the one, therefore, universal, common to all men, the open Bible, the Gospel preached to every creature under heaven ; the other personal, private, incommunicable by man to man. And in this prayer both these are equally recognized as God's gift. "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." . . . It is an unspeakably consoling and delightful reflection that this impossibility of attaining spiritual truth apart from Divine teaching which God's Word so plainly sets forth, puts no hindrance in any man's way, no hindrance in the way of the simplest learner, no hindrance in the way of the unbeliever any more than of the believer, if only the unbeliever is desirous of knowing what is truth. . . . This prayer implies the Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible ; for is it not plainly in-

controvertible but if the Bible be a book which the wisest man cannot understand, and therefore cannot interpret, without Divine teaching direct from God, it must be a book which no man could have written without such teaching? *E. R. Conder.*

The man who uttered these words felt that he was under Divine law, and that it deeply concerned him to know it well; that to realize its sublimity and comprehensiveness, its marvellous wisdom, its perfect righteousness, would be light, and strength, and life to his soul, but that so to realize it God must vouchsafe to him a sacred influence, a spiritual enlightenment, and, he adds, sufficient faith in his God to believe that He was able and willing thus to help him. We need to have our eyes opened to see the law, our minds helped to understand the truth. The reason of man can no more act independently of God than his will can. Just as the will has been made to find its life in the holiness of God, reason has been made to find its life in the wisdom of God. Unless God open our eyes to behold the wonders of His law, no clearness in the outward revelation of its wonders will give us a true view of it. We shall see and yet not perceive. *R. Flint.*

Scripture can be savingly understood only in and by the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel is a picture of God's free grace to sinners. Were we in a room hung with the finest paintings and adorned with the most exquisite statues, we could not see one of them, if all light were excluded. Now the blessed Spirit's irradiation is the same to the mind that outward light is to the bodily eyes. *Toptady.* —As the sun can be seen only by its own light, so Christ can be known only by His own Spirit. The sun can make dark things clear; but it cannot make a blind man to see them. But herein is the excellency of this Divine Sun, that He illuminates not only the object, but the faculty; doth not only open the mysteries of His kingdom, but opens blind eyes to behold them. *Leighton.*—Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can. And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the Word of God till it be given him from above. *Caryl.*

The Holy Spirit is needful to enable me so to understand the Bible that, instead of being a mere outer truth it may exercise an influence within, overcoming the hostility of my heart, sanctifying its governing principles, and giving new life and energy within. Hence it is the

Spirit that fills every symbol in it with celestial glory, that inspires every truth in the Bible with life, gives to its every promise sweet music, and communicates to the heart that studies its receptive power, and makes this Book the guide unto life everlasting. *Cumming.*—By removing the mists of prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self-sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium, by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding, the Holy Ghost enables men to behold the wondrous things of the law. *Melville.* —The Bible is dull when I am dull. When I am really alive, and set in upon the text with a tidal pressure of living affinities it opens, it multiplies discoveries, and reveals depths even faster than I can note them. The worldly spirit shuts the Bible; the Spirit of God makes it a fire, flaming out all meanings and glorious truths. *Bushnell.*

The Bible is heaven-spoken; but we must separate heaven from the word which invests it, while it reveals it; and this is what Jesus Christ teaches us to do. It is an interpretation, moreover, which no commentary can supply for us; we must seek it upon our knees, saying to God, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law!" Then we shall receive God's witness within ourselves; then what is written in the heart will agree so well with what is written in the Book, that we shall recognize in both the work of the same Spirit. The Bible, we said, just now, is heaven-spoken; the Bible thus listened to, would be heaven seen, felt, loved! *A. Monod.*

The language of the Bible is divinely chosen; its words and figures are designed to be just what they are: "*The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried, seven times refined.*" We may, therefore, search them, and rationally search them, for a Divine significance. Not one jot or tittle of it shall fail to reward our study. Christ has given us assurance of this; the Light of the World hath told us that the Scriptures are everywhere full of Him and His salvation. He Himself found rich meanings lying under words and forms of speech in which the Sadducean rationalists of His day saw nothing. We may, therefore, expect to discover in them "treasures new and old." We shall see "wondrous things out of the Divine law," and these will be, not merely conceits of our own minds, but thoughts substantial, living ideas, having in themselves evidence that they are true fruits, not of any mere human thinking, but of the "*ingrowing Word,*"

the life-giving Word that *saves*; that is, *heals*, makes sound, our souls. *T. Lewis.*

We cannot understand our Scriptures without a spirit which is in harmony with them. In the neglect of true Christian culture, in the disuse of spiritual communion and a loving, obedient endeavor, the mind will grow dark. It is an appalling retribution that they who exclude the light gradually lose the power to see. If the real truth is disliked, or regarded with prejudice, the mind will be darkened to its perception. We meet a blind man, with downcast face and hesitating step, groping his way along the street, and are sad for our blind brother. But how much more an object of compassion is he of the sightless soul. *W. A. Stearns.*

The Word of God is the great subject of this Psalm, and it is surprising how much this man found in it, when we think how small a part of that Word was then in his hands. We can only account for it when we light upon a prayer like this, which shows such a desire to use it to full advantage, and an earnest request that God would help him in doing so. The great end of the Word of God then, as now, was practical. *Ker.*—What the age demands is a more intense study of the Holy Scriptures, accompanied by this prayer of the Psalmist. The Bible itself must be brought out, its mighty spiritual power unfolded, as the best answer to infidelity, the Bible subjectively, the Bible objectively, as the great standing miracle of human history, as presenting a train of events most unaccountable in their bearing, on the world's course, as containing ideas which no philosophy, no theory of development can ever explain. To such study it will reveal itself as "the power of God. *Taylor Lewis.*

Bible students should constitute a body of sound, intelligent, magnanimous, eminently spiritual men and women, the salt of every church, the light of every village and city. Increased knowledge of the Scriptures they undoubtedly have. But is it not, in many cases, the mere letter, the historical fact, the geographical locality, or biographical incident? Do they *live* in that world of rich conceptions and of imperishable truths which is opened to them in the Bible? *B. B. Edwards.*

19. A sojourner in the earth. The prayer is perfectly suited to the condition here described. "A stranger," here but for a little, and yet morally beginning the great hereafter, "never continuing in one stay," and yet possessing one being, and developing and settling that being into character. God's commandments, revealed and brought home to the heart,

will yield plentifully all that can be needed in the pilgrim state. In one way or other they touch all the chances and hazards of the journey and all the requirements of the traveler, while they all combine to make one supreme influence of preparation for what will come when the earthly journey is over. *Raleigh.*—The pilgrim-spirit is the pulse of the soul. All of us are travelling to eternity. The worldling is at home in the earth, a pilgrim only by constraint. The child of God is a stranger in the earth. Heaven is the country of his birth. His kindred, his inheritance, his Saviour, his hope, his home is there. *C. B.*

Hide not Thy commandments. Here is a creature of sensibility and affection standing in this world, self-severed from it, separate, disportioned, lonely, and all for the love of God and in order to keep the best place for Him and His heavenly gifts and joys. Is there not in the very condition a mighty argument for the enforcement of the prayer? It is not possible that God should leave such a prayer without answer. He will "hide" neither His "commandments" nor Himself from such an one. He will reveal. He will refresh. He will visit, surprising the stranger sometimes with the light of an unexpected presence, meeting the pilgrim at times on the upward way to give foretaste and some pre-enjoyment of that perfect blessedness which will come to him when he passes into a world where he will be stranger and pilgrim no more. *Raleigh.*

God's law and His written Word are guides to present duty, which, if faithfully accepted, will help to set you in accordance with the mind of God and the plan He has laid for you. "I am a stranger in the earth," said one, "hide not Thy commandments from me;" knowing that God's commandments would give him a clew to the true meaning and business of his life. . . . The simple thought of a life which is to be the unfolding of a Divine plan is too beautiful, too captivating, to suffer one indifferent or heedless moment. Living in this manner, every turn of your experience will be a discovery to you of God, every change a token of His fatherly counsel. Whatever obscurity, darkness, trial, suffering falls upon you: your defeats, losses, injuries; your outward state, employment, relations; what seems hard, unaccountable, severe, or, as nature might say, vexatious, all these you will see are parts or constitutive elements in God's beautiful and good plan for you. Trust God, have an implicit trust in God, and these very things will impart the highest zest to life! *H. B.*

20. The object of our desires is an inexhaustible spring. *The longing of the soul* can never over-reach its object. *The cherished desire*, therefore, will become the established habit, the element in which the child of God lives and thrives. Let not the fervor of desire here expressed be conceived to be out of reach; nor let it be expected in the way of some sudden manifestation or excitement. Rather let us look for it in a patient, humble, and persevering waiting upon the Lord. C. B.—The Psalmist longed for the Word *at all times*; in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair; in affliction, the Word was his cordial; in worldly increase, it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the Word either for one necessity or another. *Manton*.

Dr. Chalmers, after kindling churches and arousing nations to their duties, summed up his own attainments in the word “desirousness,” and took as the text that best described his inner state, this passionate, almost painful cry of David: “*My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments.*” But how grand was the attainment! To be in old age as simple as a little child before God! *Raleigh*.

21. The proud. This is a style commonly given to the wicked, because as it is our oldest evil, so is it the strongest and first that strives in our corrupt nature to carry men to transgress the bounds appointed by the Lord. And what else is the cause of all transgression, but that man’s ignorant pride will have his will preferred to the will of God. W. Cooper.—The proud man hath no cause to be proud, as other sinners have; the covetous for riches, the ambitious for honor, the voluptuous for pleasure, the slothful for ease; but the proud man hath no cause to be proud but pride itself, which saith, like Pharaoh, “I will not obey.” *Henry Smith*.

We wonder not at this expression of the mind of God concerning pride. There is no sin more abhorrent to His character. It is as if we were taking the crown from His head and placing it upon our own. It is man making a god of himself; acting from himself and for himself. Nor is this principle less destructive to our own happiness. And yet it is not only rooted, but it often rears its head and blossoms, and bears fruit, even in hearts which “hate and abhor” its influence. It is always active, always ready imperceptibly to mix itself up with everything. Let no saint, therefore, however near he may be living to God, consider himself beyond the reach of this temptation. C. B.

Are cursed. The proud sinners bless themselves, God curses them; and though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world; Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows Himself above them; and these rebukes are earnest of worse. H.

22. Hard words, indeed, and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, Lord “*remove*” them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from any duty, or discouraged in it. H.—*Kept Thy testimonies.* If we have the testimony of our consciences that in the midst of a persecuting world we “*have kept His testimonies,*” here is our evidence of our Father’s special love, of the indwelling, comforting, supporting Spirit. Here, then, is our warrant of hope that the overwhelming weight will be *removed from us*. C. B.

23. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses; he *meditated in God’s statutes*, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man, he heard not; when they spake against him, he found that in the Word of God which spake for him, and spake comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. They that have pleasure in communion with God may easily despise the censures of men. H.

Thy statutes. It is impossible to live either *Christianly* or *comfortably* without the daily use of Scripture. It is necessary for our direction in all our ways before we begin them, and when we have ended them, for the warrant of our approbation of them, for resolving of our doubts, and comforting us in our griefs. For matter, it is wisdom; for authority, it is Divine and absolute; with an unspeakable power to stamp our heart. W. Struthers.

24. They who would have God’s testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in *close* walking take them for their delight in *comfortable* walking. H.—They who make the Word their delight will always find it their *counsellor*. The Christian is a man of faith every step of his way. And this habitual use and daily familiarity with *the testimonies of God* will show him the pillar and the cloud in all the dark turns of His heavenly road. The word will be to him as the “Urim and Thummim,” an infallible *counsellor*. Though it may not mark every precise act of duty, yet it determines the standard to which the most minute acting of the mind should be

brought, and the disposition, which will reflect the light of the will of God upon our path. C. B.

25. It is not a strange experience for believers to be in this depressed condition ; the soul cleaving to the dust. Sometimes there may be physical causes connected with a man's state of health, and sometimes other providences of God are concerned in producing this state of things ; but it is a stage in a man's spiritual history. Generally it is connected with indwelling sin. More particularly it arises in connection with the failure of faith on the part of believers. Looking at it from the side of God's providence, it is permitted by God just as a step in the believer's history, because it is necessary that the believer's history should include an enlarged acquaintance with himself, with his own insufficiency, with his own tendency to unbelief, and darkness, and sin. It is not characteristic of a believer to be contented in this condition. How can any one who believes in the reality and presence of a living God be content with a feeling of this deadness and depression, this awful contrast to the life and glory of that life-giving God ? More than that, the believer has faith in the presence and power of a life-giving Christ. He has faith also in the life-giving Spirit, and in the mission and work of the Holy Ghost in its power, and gentleness, and love. How can a man who believes this be content to go on with his soul cleaving to the dust ? Therefore he casts himself on God in prayer, and you find him declaring to God the condition in which he is : " My soul cleaveth to the dust," and applying to God to meet this case of his : " Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word."

R. Rainy.

It is not a little remarkable that while the Psalmist says, " My soul cleaveth to the dust," he should say in v. 31, "*I have cleaved unto Thy testimonies ;*" for it is the same word in both verses. The thing is altogether compatible with the experience of the believer. Within there is the body of indwelling sin and the undying principle of Divine grace. There is the contest between them ; " the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5 : 17), and the believer is constrained to cry out, " O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7 : 24). So the believer prays, Cause that I be not put to shame. And keeping close to Christ, you shall not be put to shame world without end. *J. Stephen.*—It is the grand proof of a renewed mind that it fights vigorously against all sin, inward as well as outward ; that it desires to " grow in grace and in the knowledge of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ;" that it " hungers and thirsts after righteousness ;" that it longs to lay itself out for the glory of God, and to abound more and more in every good word and work. Where this is not the case, faith is not ; and where faith is not, Christ is not ; and where Christ is not, Satan must be. *Hill.*

From the great conflict with sin none come off without many a scar. We may wrestle and prevail, but there will be touches of the enemy, which will leave their long and bitter memories. The way to heaven is made of falling down and rising up again. The battle is no steady, onward fight, but rallies and retreats, retreats and rallies. The reason of our defeats is that the old sin of the character continues and continues with unabated force in the heart of a child of God. There are two ways in which sin breaks out and gains an advantage over a believer : First, a new temptation suddenly presents itself. Secondly, the old habit of sin recurs ; recurs, indeed, sevenfold, but still the same sin. . . . All sin in a believer must arise from a reduction of grace. This is the result of grieving the Holy Ghost by a careless omission of prayer or other means of grace. There was an inward defeat before there was an outward and apparent one. But defeat is not final. It is not the end of the campaign ; it is but one event in the war. It may even be converted into a positive good to the soul, for God can and will overrule guilt to gain. He allows the defeat to teach us repentance and humility. J. V.

Sanctification is not mending the old nature which we inherit from Adam ; it is cultivating and developing the new nature which we receive from Christ. The old nature cannot be improved ; it is under a ban and a curse ; it is to be crucified with its affections and lusts, and mortified in its members ; we are to put it off, as we put off a worn-out and defiled garment ; nay, we are to count ourselves dead to it, as if it had no more relation to us, since we are alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The soul is like a house of which strangers have taken possession, and lord it cruelly over the owner. What shall you do for your liberty ? Pride will never be humble, lust will never be pure, selfishness will never think of a neighbor's interests, envy will never exult in a neighbor's joy. The only thing to be done is to turn them out by bringing in others stronger than they, who will, little by little, get the mastery over them. Thus the way to conquer pride is to cultivate humility ; if we would be gentle, let us practise self-control ; if we would think of others and

help them, we must bear their burdens. The old affections must be expelled by new ; the invading tyrants must be besieged and cast out by legitimate owners ; and though we shall carry with us to our grave the roots of our old nature, though not till we have cast off the garment of our corruptible flesh shall we have our full liberty as sons of God, it is of infinite moment to us to ascertain that the only way of holiness is to overcome evil with good ; and that there is no limit to the power of the grace of God save that which is imposed by ourselves. *Thorold.*

But this complaint is the language of conflict and humiliation, not of despondency. Mark the believer carrying it to the Lord. *Quicken me.* Breathe upon me Thine own life, that I may rise from the *dust* and *cleave* to Thee. This cry for quickening grace is the exercise of faith. We have a covenant to plead. Faith is the hand that takes hold of the promise, "*according to Thy Word.*" Can this Word fail ? "He is faithful that hath promised." The man who takes hold of this plea is "a prince who has power with God and prevails." C. B.—*The way* from the deepest pain to the best consolation is through the humble, earnest, persevering prayer, that He who lives would also give life to our souls, and continue to increase it. This the God of life alone can work. Only, let us not forget that He who will quicken us *according to His Word*, also performs this *through His Word*. Let us, then, draw from out the eternally flowing fountain, and henceforth leave it unconditionally to Him how He will listen to our cry. Lord, do with us as seemeth good to Thee ! Only let our souls live, that they may praise Thee here and eternally ! *Van O.*

Quicken Thou me. This phrase occurs nine times, and only in this Psalm. It is of great importance, as it expresses the spiritual change by which a child of Adam becomes a child of God. Its source is God ; the instrument by which it is effected is the Word. M. —No man can quicken his own soul. It is the sovereign work of almighty power. It is equally ascribed to the loving Father, redeeming Son, and sanctifying Spirit (John 5 : 21 ; 6 : 63). "I am come, that ye might have life," saith Jesus. He quickeneth the dead in trespasses and sins ; and then they cry to Him to have life more abundantly. And as they too often find themselves cleaving to the dust, to the sensible, earthly, vain enjoyments of this world, this alarms them ; it is a burden and grief to them. Hence they pour out their complaints to their beloved Lord with, "Master, let it not be thus. Quicken my drooping spirit. Enliven

my declining heart. Cheer my languishing soul, according to the Word of Thy grace and the truth of Thy promises." Here is the blessed confidence of faith. His Word is our plea. By that we have assurance of being heard and answered. *W. Mason.*

The Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It is the instrument by which the Spirit worketh. He does not tell us anything that is out of the record ; but all that is within it He sends home with clearness and effect upon the mind. He does not make us wise above that which is written, but He makes us wise up to that which is written. The Spirit does not add a single truth or a single character to the Book of Revelation. He enables the spiritual man to see what the natural man cannot see ; but the spectacle which He lays open is uniform and immutable. It is the Word of God which is ever the same ; and he whom the Spirit of God has enabled to look to the Bible with a clear and affecting discernment sees no phantom passing before him ; but, amid all the visionary extravagance with which he is charged, can, for every one article of his faith, and every one duty of his practice, make his triumphant appeal to the law and to the testimony. *Chalmers.*

26. This verse contains a prayer, with a reason after this form : O Lord, I have oft before declared unto Thee the whole state and course of my life, my wanderings, my wants, my doubts, my griefs ; I hid nothing from Thee, and thou, according to my necessity, didst always hear me. Therefore, now, Lord, I pray Thee to teach me ; by Thy light illuminate me, that I may know Thy statutes and receive grace to walk in them. This is a good argument in dealing with the Lord ; I have gotten many mercies and favorable answers from thee ; therefore, Lord, I pray Thee to give me more ; for whom He loves, He loves to the end ; and where He begins to show mercy He ceaseth not till He crown His children with mercy. And so gracious is the Lord that He esteems Himself to be honored as oft as we give Him the praise that we have received mercies from Him, and therefore come to seek more. *W. Cowper.*

27. Mark the reiterated cries of the man of God for heavenly light. *Teach me Thy statutes ; make me to understand the way of Thy precepts.* The need and the encouragement for these cries is equally manifest. Who has ever been known to *understand the way* of himself ? And to whom, walking in a well-ordered conversation, has the Lord ever failed to show it ? C. B.

He who lets one day slip by without feeding

upon some portion of the Bible endangers the health of his soul as truly as the man defrauds his body who goes without food. And no sooner does he allow one day to pass thus forgetful of God and His truth, than a tendency is begotten which promises a second omission, and a third, and so on, until this bread of life, sent down from heaven for the nourishment of that which is immortal within us is wholly neglected, and leanness of soul results in spiritual decay.

Anon.

28. In the midst of heaviness the child of God cannot forget that he is loved, that he is saved; and the recollection of this sovereign mercy makes his tears of godly sorrow tears of joy. When we are most sensible of utter helplessness, and most simple in reliance upon Divine strength, then the *soul melting for heaviness* is most especially upheld and established. "*Heaviness* in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad."

32. *I will run.* But how? By "the good hand of my God upon me," delivering and *enlarging my heart*. He does not say, I will make no efforts unless Thou work for me; but if *Thou wilt enlarge, I will run*. Weakness is not the plea for indolence, but for quickening grace. "Draw me, and I will run after Thee." C. B. The Christian life is represented as a race, a work, a labor, a conflict, a warfare. It needs a strong, constant, unwavering purpose, along with the constant, ever-present, omnipotent grace of God. God is our all in all. Christ's strength must be made perfect in our weakness. The Psalmist says, I will run in the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart. Here is the purpose, I will run; here is the way, Thy commandments; here is the soul's dependence, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart; and here is the source of power, the grace of God in the heart, in the deep heart. To this Paul answers, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do. Blessed harmony of God's working and man's working, of God's grace and man's obedience! *Cheever.*

The heart is the master; the feet soon run when the heart is free and energetic. Let the affections be aroused and eagerly set on Divine things, and our actions will be full of force, swiftness, and delight. God must work in us first, and then we shall will and do according to His good pleasure. He must change the heart, unite the heart, encourage the heart, strengthen the heart, and enlarge the heart, and then the course of the life will be gracious, sincere, happy, and earnest. S.

The law is not perfectly fulfilled, except by love. But love is not commanded, it is inspired. The severest injunctions, and the most formidable threatenings could not create in the soul a single emotion of tenderness to God; love alone gives birth to love. Thus, as long as we have before us only the law with its threatenings, we do not fulfil it in the spirit by which it ought to be fulfilled; that is, we do not fulfil it at all. The Gospel has said that "love casteth out fear;" it is also just to say, that fear casteth out love; for we cannot love when we fear. It is the privilege and glory of the Gospel to give to the soul enlargement and freedom; grace being proclaimed and fear banished, we dare love, we can love. "I will run in the way of Thy commandments," says the Psalmist, "when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." The heart opens and expands under the gentle warmth of Divine love and the sweet rays of hope. Obedience becomes joyous; it is no longer a painful effort, but a spontaneous and involuntary soaring of the renovated soul. Thus obedience is the fruit of love, and love is the fruit of grace. *A. Vinet.*

The Psalmist was conscious that his heart was narrow. He craved for more freedom of faith, for larger desires after God, for fuller trust in Him, and for warmer and stronger love toward Him. There are few Christians who will not have the same feeling, and will not be conscious how small and low is their state of grace, how poor their service to their God compared to what it should be, and what it might be with God to help them. Here, again, our hope is in God. He can enlarge our hearts by more perfectly revealing Himself within them. He enters into the soul, and the soul grows with His presence. His glory, and greatness, and beauty snap the restraining bands, and stretch the heart in which He dwells till it becomes capable of peace and joy unknown before. *E. Garbett.*

It is evident that we may "go" in the way of commandments and not "run." There is the slow creeping of a mere abstract sense of stern duty. There is the slow walk of simple conscientiousness. There is the slavish course propelled by fear. There is the capricious step, half feeling, half principle, which is continually halting. But all this is not to run. To run is a joyous thing, and shows that the affections and the heart are drawn to it. To run is free, and tells a mind unbound. To run is quick and constant progress; and the attainments are clear, and distinct, and large. To run is a light and easy motion, and marks facility. To run

makes the goal of hope near, and gives the confidence of success. J. V.

Saddest of all is the practical depreciation of Christ, or of what He will do as a Saviour, experimentally, from sin. The possibilities of liberly, assurance, a good conscience, a mind entered into rest, are, by one means or another, let down, obscured, or quite taken away. To believe much is enthusiasm, to attempt much, fanaticism. The assumption is that Christ will, in fact, do only a little for us, just as there is only a little done; when the very sufficient reason is that there is only a little allowed to be done. As to any common footing with the ancient saints in their inspirations, guidances, and

gifts, it is even a kind of presumption to think of it. Oh, it is a very sad picture! Dear Lord Jesus can it never be that better room shall be given Thee? H. B.

"Largeness of heart" is a pure gift of God. Still in this, as in everything, while all is of God's grace, the grace itself lies within man's responsibility. J. V.—We must enlarge our capacity for receiving large things from God. When we have fulfilled this condition and have been set free from the bondage of sin, how blessed, and happy, and joyous is the career before us. The resources of God are simply inexhaustible; the resources of the Christian life are the same. C. W. Furse.

PSALM CXIX., 33-48.

VERSES 33-48.

IN HE.

- 33 TEACH me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;
And I shall keep it unto the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy
law;
Yea, I shall observe it with my whole
heart.
- 35 Make me to go in the path of thy command-
ments;
For therein do I delight.
- 36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
- 37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity,
And quicken me in thy ways.
- 38 Confirm thy word unto thy servant,
Who is devoted to thy fear.
- 39 Turn away my reproach whereof I am
afraid;
For thy judgments are good.
- 40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:
Quicken me in thy righteousness.

; VAU.

- 41 Let thy mercies also come unto me, O LORD,
Even thy salvation, according to thy word.
- 42 So shall I have an answer for him that re-
proacheth me;
For I trust in thy word.
- 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out
of my mouth;
For I have hoped in thy judgments.
- 44 So shall I observe thy law continually
For ever and ever.
- 45 And I will walk at liberty;
For I have sought thy precepts.
- 46 I will also speak of thy testimonies before
kings,
And will not be ashamed.
- 47 And I will delight myself in thy command-
ments,
Which I have loved.
- 48 I will lift up my hands also unto thy com-
mandments, which I have loved;
And I will meditate in thy statutes.

33-36. The sense of these four methodical petitions in this section is as follows: Make me to see, make me to understand, make me to go in, and make me to love to go in, the beaten and narrow path of thy testimonies. Luther gives almost the exact sense, for he translates the opening words of each verse by terms signifying re-

spectively, "Point out to me," "Explain to me," "Lead me," and "Incline (bend, slope) my heart." *Marchant*.—Religion may come to be looked upon too much as a round or series of emotions, and the proof of its presence sought for too exclusively in the vividness and vigor of these emotions. The soul, instead of going

out of itself after Christ, looking away to His cross and upward to His crown, searches within itself for the warrant of its hopes. The work of grace, which, as it comes from God should go out after Him, throbbing with a Divine pulse, sinks down and terminates too much within us. We make it a thing of feeling, which, from its very nature, may be delusive; or, if genuine, comparatively meagre and fruitless. Neither right beliefs nor lively emotions of joy and gratitude are enough. There is also something to be done; there are self-denials to be endured; there is a warfare to be waged; a lifelong service to be accomplished. *R. D. Hitchcock.*

33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it.* If Thou continue a Teacher of me, I shall continue a servant to Thee. Perseverance cannot be unless continual light and grace be furnished to us from the Lord. Let us always pray that He would ever abide with us, to inform us by His light and lead us by His power in that way which may bring us to Himself. *W. Cowper.*—Under this influence we live, we endure, we cannot fail of *keeping the way unto the end.* Thus the end crowns the work. *C. B.*

34. *Make me understand (it) and I will keep Thy law, and will observe it with a whole heart.* The first verb is too vaguely rendered in the English versions (*give me understanding*). The form of the last verb is one expressing strong desire and fixed determination. *With a whole heart, or with all (my) heart.* *A.*

Understanding is needful in order that we may know what is commanded and what is forbidden, and how far; that we may avoid the snares laid for us in the way of duty; that we may respect things according to their due worth; that we may do good works in their proper time, place, and manner; above all, that the affections may be directed by the judgment, and not the judgment by the affections. *Bishop Horne.*—Knowledge gives us a sight, and love gives us possession; we find God by knowledge, but we enjoy Him by love. Let us improve our knowledge of Him for inflaming our affections to Him, that we may be prepared for the glory of our eternal life. The understanding is but the door of the heart; to let God and Christ stick there, and not bring them into the heart, is to give a cold entertainment to that which deserves the best. *Charnock*

35. Not only do we need to know the path of God's commandments, we need Divine help to go in it. Under the complete influence of Divine grace, when *understanding has been given* to discern the beauty of the path, the soul's

warmest desire is fixed upon it. Conscious helplessness looks upward. *Make me to go.* *C. B.*—God's teaching begets obedience; He sheweth us the path of life, and He maketh us to go in it. It is such instruction as giveth strength, that exciteth the sluggish will, and breaketh the force of corrupt inclinations; yea, it giveth not only the will, but the deed; in short, it engageth us in a watchful, careful, uniform, and constant obedience. *Manton.*

36. *Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to gain.* Here again the sense of absolute dependence or Divine influence is strongly implied. *Gain*, profit, lucre, here put for overweening love of it, supreme devotion to it. *A.*—The prayer, "Incline not my heart to covetousness," is of the same sort with this: "Lead us not into temptation," which by no means implies that God ever tempts men to evil, but only that we have occasion to beg His help to withstand such temptation. *C.*

The native principle of man draws him to his own self, to his own indulgence, pleasure, *covetousness*, assuming a thousand forms of gratifying self at the expense of love to God. There is probably no principle so opposed to the *Lord's testimonies*. It casts out the principle of obedience, since the love of God cannot co-exist with the love of the world; and the very desire to serve mammon is a proof of unfaithfulness to God. In the midst, therefore, of temptation without and a world of sin within, go onward with the pilgrim's prayer indelibly fixed on your heart, "*Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*" *C. B.*—Covetousness is of so malignant a nature, that one may have the poison of riches in the midst of poverty; grace is so powerful, that one may have the blessing of poverty in the midst of riches. God by no means permits Himself to be outdone in generosity; He gives all for all, or rather, all for nothing; heaven for earth, Himself for us. *Quesnel.*

Covetousness is used, for the most part, in connection with one particular form of it, the desire of money. But the word "covetousness" has a much broader meaning, namely, that earnest desire to make one's own and possess for one's self what belongs rightfully to another. There are numberless covetous persons who desire no man's silver or gold; no man's houses or lands, no man's external possessions of any kind; for the commandment not to covet is exceeding broad, and the state pointed out very subtle and universal. The real nature and extent of covetousness is seen, when we take into consideration the difference there is be-

tween that state which looks at everything with a desire to obtain some personal and peculiar benefit, and that state which is content to be and do what it can and where it is, as part of the Creator's whole. There is something vulgar in the race for power and wealth, for personal distinction and extra privileges and superior elevation. But more than this: it is true, as the spiritual Fénelon says, "that whoever regards *any grace* even, with the pleasure of appropriation, turns it into poison. As we abstain from desiring to possess ourselves *in our own way*, we lose ourselves in God." And here we touch upon the great reality of all spiritual blessings, the only essential good. That which we all really need in this respect we shall grow into as we become pure and simple, free from desire and from personal greed. "To abstain from possessing ourselves in our own way," is to place ourselves in that current of influence and activity wherein we shall receive what is best adapted to our state, and shall do what we can with spontaneous and joyous freedom and ease. It is one thing to be drawn by the attraction of the beautiful and true, and another to desire that I may be their individual possessor. In the one case, I love beauty and goodness, and in the other, I love myself. *C. C. Shackford.*

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.* That sin may be avoided we must avoid whatsoever leads to or occasions it. The eye is apt to make a stand, or fix itself, when we come in view of an ensnaring object; therefore it is our duty to hasten it away, or to pray that God would make it pass off from it. He that feareth burning must take heed of playing with fire. *Caryl.*—*Turn away mine eyes*, lest looking cause liking and lusting. In Hebrew the same word signifieth both an *eye* and a *fountain*; to show that from the eye, as from a fountain, floweth much mischief; and by that window Satan often winds himself into the soul. *Trapp.*—Sin first entered man's mind by the eye, and it is still a favorite gate for the incoming of Satan's allurements; hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as "*turned away*;" for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. S.

Weak dallying with forbidden desires is sure to end in wicked clutching at them. If you know that a thing cannot be won without transgression, do not tamper with hankerings for it. Keep away from the edge, and shut your "eyes from beholding vanity." A. M.—The worldliness which most of us have most to fear is a negative worldliness, a worldliness without great

sins, because it has not great temptations; a quiet, unobtrusive worldliness, so unpretending that it hides itself even from our own notice; a worldliness which the more effectually deposes God, because it does not overtly rebel against Him—nay, in words it owns His being, reenacts, without reference to Him, some of His laws, yet shaped so that they should not press upon it; a worldliness which is the more hopeless, because it substitutes self for God so universally, yet so noiselessly and imperceptibly, that the soul, like Samson, does not know that God is departed from it, and that it is living without Him. To live as thousands live, mainly, it would seem, to store up their little dues, slowly or quickly to scrape themselves up a competence and leave the rest of their substance to their babes, to join in the race for wealth, to live without public spirit, without love to man, with no care but for our own selfish comforts, or interests, to take the print of a mammon-worshipping age, and so to live dismal, illiberal, acquisitive lives, is a terrible danger to us all. *Anon.*

Take heed that a subtle love of things seen does not supplant in you spiritual sympathies and aspirations. While you are alive to all that is noble and beautiful both in nature and art, be wise enough not to forget that the world and the most glorious things in it will by and by be dissolved, and that the objects of Christian faith alone will remain forever. *J. D. Geden.*—The love of the world is only unlearned by the love of the Father. And there is only one way in which that higher love is learned. The cross of Christ is the measure of God's love to us and the measure of the meaning of man's existence. When once a man has learned the spirit of the cross the power of the world is gone, and no man need bid him love not the world. *F. W. R.*

Quicken me. We must watch as well as pray. For as watchfulness without prayer is presumption, so prayer without watchfulness is self-delusion. But the most effectual way of avoiding temptation is to be *quickened* to more life, energy, delight, and devotedness *in the way of my God*. The secret of Christian progress is simplicity and diligence. This spirit leaves no wish of the heart for *beholding vanity*. C. B.—The prayer indicates our greatest need, more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it also tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. S.

38. "Word" refers to promise, "estab-

lished" when fulfilled. In the last clause, the best critics suppose the word for "fear" to be used in the sense of *fearers*, thus : Confirm unto Thy servant Thy promise, which is for Thy fearers, given to those that fear Thee. C.—Confirm it : make it *seem* firm and true ; let not my mind be vacillating or sceptical in regard to Thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism. There is a class of men whose minds are naturally sceptical and unbelieving, and for such men such a prayer is peculiarly appropriate. For none can it be improper to pray that the Word of God may always seem to them to be true ; that their minds may never be left to the influence of doubt and unbelief. *Barnes.*

Who is devoted to Thy fear. He who hath received from the Lord grace to fear Him may be bold to seek any necessary good thing from Him ; because the fear of God hath annexed the promises of all other blessings with it. *W. Cowper.*—If there be one point in human experience more dangerous than another, it is exactly the point between faith and practice, between inward love and outward work. Let us pray God to "stablish His Word" to us in this respect also, to make religion to us more than clear intellectual faith, more even than heart-joy. Let us ask Him to make it the supreme and practically regulative force of our whole life, calm, steady, onward, guiding and ruling us from duty to duty and from day to day. *Raleigh.*

39. The thought seems to be : Keep me from the reproach of breaking Thy commandments, for those commandments are not grievous but good, sweet, and full of blessing to one who longs after them as I do. P.—The reproach of bringing dishonor upon the name of God is feared and deprecated with most anxious, importunate prayer. The fear of this reproach is a practical principle of tender watchfulness and circumspection, and of habitual dependence upon an Almighty upholding power. C. B.

40. Where our longings are, there are we in the sight of God. If we have not attained perfection, it is something to have hungered after it. He who has given us to desire, will also grant us to obtain, and we may safely conclude that He who has begun the good work will carry it on. "*Quicken me in Thy righteousness.*" Give me more life wherewith to follow Thy righteous law. It is the Holy Spirit who can pour new life into us ; let us not cease crying to Him. Let the life we already possess show itself by longing for more. S.—He who really longs after Divine truth, mourns that he

does not long more. When the heart has no love the mind has no light, and can only judge the precepts erroneously. "The pure in heart" see better with the mind than can the impure. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Love so enlarges discernment that he who really loves often finds that his judgment of the blessedness of truth has outstripped even his longing for it. Hence it is the quick who cry, "*Quicken me ;*" it is those who have living desires who pray for yet more life in the way of righteousness. *Marchant.*

There is no holiness if Thou, Lord, withdraw Thy presence ; no wisdom profiteth if Thy Spirit cease to direct ; no strength availeth without Thy support ; no watchfulness effectual when Thy holy vigilance is not our guard. For no sooner are we left to ourselves than the waves of corruption rush upon us, and we sink and perish ; but if Thou reach forth Thy omnipotent hand we walk upon the sea and live. In our own nature we are unsettled as the sand upon the mountain ; but in Thee we have the stability of the throne in heaven. We are cold and insensible as darkness and death ; but are kindled with light and life by the holy fire of Thy love. *Thomas à Kempis.*

It is the Spirit that quickeneth. He does not merely prescribe. He transforms. He is perpetually asserting His presence by His spiritual transformations. He makes the feeble strong, the melancholy bright, the cold-blooded fervent, the irascible gentle, the uninstructed wise, the conceited humble, and the timid unflinching. Now, as of old, "He filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away." He gives Himself most fully to those who ask for Him secretly and often. The soul hears Him, it sees Him not ; the soul feels Him, yet as if insensibly. And His presence is itself that peace of God which passeth all understanding. Henceforth, enriched by His indwelling, the soul's desire is to desire nothing, its will is to will for nothing, its care to care for nothing, its wealth to possess nothing out of God, its one, its everlasting treasure. This is not mysticism ; it is the experience of those who have heard within themselves that there is a Holy Ghost. This is the subjective side of lives which have been spent in the purest and most unselfish benevolence, but the secret of whose strength has escaped the notice of ordinary lookers on. H. P. L.

41. Even Thy salvation. Here is the first mention of salvation in the Psalm, and it is joined with mercy : "By grace are ye saved." Salvation is styled "Thy salvation,"

thus ascribing it wholly to the Lord : " He that is our God is the God of salvation." Salvation is an aggregate of mercies incalculable in number, priceless in value, incessant in application, eternal in endurance. To the God of our mercies be glory, world without end. S.

42. There is a play upon the two senses of the term " word," thus : " And I will answer my revilers a word, for I have trusted in Thy Word." Having trusted in Thy Word of promise, I shall have a word of reply to make to them when Thou shalt graciously hear this prayer. " Take not Thy Word of truth" (*i.e.*, of promise) out of my mouth; let me have it still to speak of before my enemies and to rest upon for my own soul. If God were to fail in fulfilling this Word of promise, it would, in the sense here contemplated, be quite taken out of his mouth. C.—A man of little learning, except that which he has derived from the Bible, may often silence the cavils and reproaches of the learned sceptic; a man of simple-hearted, pure piety, with no weapon but the Word of God, may often thus be better armed than if he had all the arguments of the schools at his command. *Barnes.*

Take not the Word of truth utterly out of my mouth. Not only do not take it out of my heart; but let it be ready in my mouth for a confession of my Master. Some of us know the painful trial of the indulgence of worldly habits and conversation, when a want of liberty of spirit has hindered us from standing up boldly for our God. C. B.

44. He expresseth his vehemence of desire and purpose; those that are deeply affected with anything are wont to express themselves as largely as they can. He heaps up several words, because his sense of them was so great : " *Continually, and forever, and ever, and ever.*" They imply the continuity and perpetuity of obedience. Constancy and perseverance in obedience is the commendation of it. *Manton.*

The Psalmist entreats the Lord to open his eyes that he may behold the wondrous things of the law, to teach him His statutes, to remove from him the way of lying, to incline his heart unto his testimonies and not to covetousness, to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, and not to take the Word of truth utterly out of his mouth. Each of these petitions shows how deeply impressed he was of his entire helplessness as regarded himself, and how completely dependent upon God he felt himself for any advancement in the knowledge of truth. All his studies in the Divine law, all his aspirations after holiness of life, he was assured, could

never meet with success, except by the grace of God implanting in him a right desire, and acting as an infallible guide to the proper sense of Holy Scripture and to correct principles of action. *G. Phillips.*

45. Walk at liberty. Literally, walk in a large place, a broad and easy path, God graciously fulfilling to me His promises, and my soul made strong and my steps guided wisely in His perfect way. C.—The glow of spiritual activity, and the healthfulness of Christian liberty are only to be found in a persevering and self-denying pursuit of every track of the ways of God. " If ye continue in My Word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." C. B.

Intellectual freedom consists in the subjugation of the understanding to the truth which delivers from errors, prejudices, and the babble of human opinion. Moral freedom consists in the submission of the will to duty, which is the practical outcome of truth. To do as we ought is liberty; to do as we like is slavery. Spiritual freedom consists in the bowing down of the whole man to God, who is revealed by the truth, and to serve whom is to be master of self and things. A. M.—The Gospel is the law of liberty. Such an antagonist is it to all that is unfair and arbitrary and oppressive, that it is only where there is a reign of darkness that there can be a reign of despotism. Even as it is, every Christian is a freeman. His loyalty to God is liberty. It is freedom from tyrannical lusts and task-master passions. It is the bond of iniquity broken. It is emancipation from the thralldom of Satan. *Hamilton.*

I will walk at liberty; for I seek Thy precepts. When the Bible says that a man led by the Spirit is not under the law, it does not mean that he is free, because he may sin without being punished for it; but it means that he is free because being taught by God's Spirit to love what His law commands he is no longer conscious of acting from restraint. The law does not drive him, because the Spirit leads him. There is a state of nature when we are under the law and not converted to the love of Christ. And then there is another state, when God writes His law upon our hearts by love instead of fear. The one state is this : " I cannot do the things that I would;" the other state is this : " I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy commandments " F. W. R.

Where the Spirit of God controls the inmost affections with absolute sway, there, certainly,

the commands of religion cease to interfere with the man's will ; yea, no commands at all are given to such a man. What does he know of *the command*, Love God above all things else, when the love of God is to him the very life of his soul ? What does he know of the command, Love thy brother, when brotherly love has become so much of a second nature to him, that he ceases to breathe when he ceases to love ? The same may be said of all the commands of religion, of self-denial, chastity, humility. As it stands recorded of the pious man, that he is a tree planted by the water-brooks, which bringeth forth its fruit in its season, so all good works, in their season, that is, whenever they are called for from without, are performed by the man of this priestly spirit, without his even thinking of the fact that they are required by a *command*. *Tholuck*.

If the race were standing fast in love, perfect love, that love would be the fulfilling of the law without the law, determining itself rightly by its own blessed motions, without any statutory control whatever. It is only under sin, where the love is gone out as a principle, that we get up rules, work out adjudications, creep along toilsomely into moral customs and codes, contriving in that manner to fence about life and make society endurable. These are laws that God enacts for the lawless and disobedient ; or which they, under God, elaborate for their own protection. But who will go to love and say, thou shalt not steal, or kill, or lie ; does not love know that beforehand ? These Decalogue statutes, love wants none of them ; she fulfills them before they are given. In the perfect state of society and character in the future life moral codes and precepts are wanted no longer to regulate the conduct, all the legalities are gone by. There is no debate of reasons, no casuistry. The reign of simple love has come. *H. B.*

At liberty ! The very word has music in it. How full of suggestion of all that is bright and cheerful. And y t what advantageth freedom if we know not how to use it ? The true use of freedom requires in every case, either for the individual or for the nation, moderation, thoughtfulness, self restraint, respect for the feelings of others, definite conceptions of duty, and a deep and adequate sense of responsibility. Without these liberty is simply suicidal ; with them, and just in proportion to the firmness of its hold on these principles, it grows ever more and more unto perfection. Man's liberty is twofold. There is a liberty from without : freedom from all outward check or control ; and

there is a liberty also from within. This is the liberty without which all other liberty is valueless. Thought, speech, and action may all be free ; but if the soul itself be not free also, we shall still, whatever we may be in name, be but slaves in deed and truth. The text ascends with us to this higher thought : " I will walk at liberty ; for I speak Thy precepts." This is the very keynote to the music of heaven, God's will acting upon our will, the Spirit of Christ subduing and assimilating our spirit to itself ; this alone is true liberty ; this is taking captivity captive, and bursting the bonds of the soul in sunder. Such service is indeed perfect freedom. *T. H. Steel*.

Compliance with all just law never fails to give to the soul the highest freedom it can possibly know. Obedience is the very heart and soul of liberty. The freest man is always the most punctiliously obedient of men. To unreflecting minds this is a mystery. With them, law and liberty, obedience and freedom, too often stand for opposites, and even contradictions. By liberty they mean license. And yet, history everywhere teaches that the freest communities have always been those in which all laws are most completely obeyed ; and the most enslaved have been those in which lawlessness has prevailed. And as with communities, so with individuals. The soul in which appetite and passion have rioted, is sure, sooner or later, to cry out for the relief of even an enforced obedience. The control of iron-handed law is preferred to the trampling hoof of passion. But when the obedience of love, of love inspired by the reception of Christ as a personal Saviour, springs up in the heart, there comes with it the conscious freedom of sonship. Compulsion is changed into choice ; law, from being an outward command, is transformed into an inward principle. The spontaneous expressions of the heart are, " I delight to do Thy will, O God ; " " Oh, how love I Thy law ; it is my meditation all the day." *E. G. Robinson*.

When you are personally given up to Christ's person, you are going where He goes, helping what He does, keeping ever dear, bright company with Him in all His motions of good and sympathy, refusing even to let Him suffer without suffering with Him. And so you will do a great many more duties than you even think of now ; only they will all be sweet and easy and free, even as your love is. You will stoop low, and bear the load of many, and be the servant of all, but it will be a secret joy that you have with your Master personally. You will not be digging out points of conscience, and debating

what your duty is to this or that, or him or her, or here or yonder; indeed you will not think that you are doing much for Christ any way, not half enough; and yet He will be saying to you every hour in sweetest approbation, "Ye did it unto Me." H. B.

God never fails to prompt and teach a soul, which is simply desirous of pleasing Him. He will, if we are faithful to Him, show us how to escape the snares of a morbid self-consciousness and scrupulosity. A man with his eyes in a right condition does not, when he walks, study every step he takes, nor even make the reflection that he is using his eyes; but he guides himself instinctively by his eyes, and with their help enjoys the landscape. And a man whose ruling aim is right and single, comes at last, through all perplexity, to feel that God's service, so far from being a bondage of oppressive restraints, is perfect freedom, and that the only true way (as the Psalmist indicates) "of walking at liberty" is, "to seek His commandments." *Goulburn.*

What a glow of faithful strength and liberty is felt by one who has made it the law of his life to do what God ordains at all hazards! His course is clear. What matters it to him whether man approves or disapproves? That which he seeks is not human approval, but the keeping of the commandments of God. When he has once discovered what his Master has required of him, all dubiety is ended. He will advance to the performance, though all the world should rebuke. J. W. A.

The test of discipleship is constancy in obedience. Truth itself is rendered intelligible by the spirit of obedience; the appreciative knowledge of truth dispels error, and, by showing the evil and the danger of sin, delivers the soul from its bondage and power. Sin is a hard taskmaster; and they who begin by yielding to its pleasures must end by paying its penalties. Christ alone can free us from such bondage; and to enter into union with Him by faith is to receive that Spirit of life which is the sense of true freedom. His religion is not a yoke of rules, a bondage of forms, but the perfect law of liberty; for its life is truth and its spirit love. J. P. T.

True freedom of intellect and heart and life consists in voluntary and exact obedience to the law of God. A compulsory obedience is mere hypocrisy. An inexact obedience is a perpetual weakness. Every step taken in the statutes of the Lord with a free will is a step of freedom. But, the moment a man lifts his foot from the law of the Lord, and sets it down outside, he

places it in the nets of evil and is ensnared. But the modern and atheistic idea of liberty is the absence of all moral law, or the refusal to be controlled by law. In other words, it is licentiousness. *C. F. Deems.*

The wicked carry their prison about with them wherever they go, because their own heart is a dungeon, their passions chains and scourges to the soul; while those whom Jesus Christ has delivered, and who have renounced the world, experience the liberty of the children of God even in the midst of bonds. *Marthe.*

Political liberty is a blessing; liberty of thought is a blessing. But the greatest blessing is liberty of the conscience and the will. It is freedom from a sense of sin, when all is known to have been pardoned through the atoning Blood; freedom from a slavish fear of our Father in heaven, when conscience is offered to His unerring eye morning and evening by that penitent love which fixes its eye upon the Crucified; freedom from current prejudice and false human opinion, when the soul gazes by intuitive faith upon the actual truth; freedom from the depressing yoke of weak health or narrow circumstances, since the soul cannot be crushed which rests consciously upon the Everlasting Arms; freedom from that haunting fear of death which holds those who think really upon death at all "all their lifetime subject to bondage," unless they are His true friends and clients who by the sharpness of His own death has led the way and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." It is freedom in time, but also and beyond, freedom in eternity. In that blessed world, in the unclouded presence of the Emancipator, there is indeed a perpetual service; yet, since it is the service of love made perfect, it is only and by necessity the service of the free. H. P. L.

46, 47, 48. In these last three verses he promiseth a threefold duty of thankfulness. First, the service of his tongue. Next, the service of his affections. Thirdly, the service of his actions: A good conscience renders always great consolation, and an honest life makes great boldness to speak without fear or shame. *W. Cowper.*

47, 48. What is in the Word a law of precept, is in the heart a law of love; what is in the one a law of command, is in the other a law of liberty. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." The law of love in the heart is the fulfilling of the law of God in the Spirit. It may well be said to be written in the heart when a man doth love it. *Charnock.*

48. And I will raise my hands to Thy com-

mandments which I love, and I will muse of Thy statutes. The raising of the hands is a symbol of the raising of the heart or the affections to some elevated object. *Which I love, or have loved,* as in v. 47, the terms of which are studiously repeated with a fine rhetorical effect, which is further heightened by the *and* at the beginning, throwing both verses, as it were, into one sentence. As if he had said: I will derive my happiness from Thy commandments which I love and have loved, and to these commandments which I love and have loved I will lift up my hands and heart together. A.

Love and delight in the ways and Word of God will find natural exercise in an habitual "*meditation in the statutes.*" The breathing of the heart will be, "*O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*" It is in holy meditation on the Word of God that all the graces of the Spirit are manifested. What is the principle of faith, but the reliance of the soul upon the promises of the Word? What is the object of hope, but the apprehended glory of God? What is the excitement of desire or love, but longing, endearing contemplations of the Saviour, and of His unspeakable blessings? Hence we can scarcely conceive of the influence of grace separated from spiritual meditation on the Word. It is this which, under Divine teaching, draws out its hidden contents and exhibits them to the soul as the objects upon which the principles and affections of the Divine life are habitually exercised. C. B. — If the Christian would have an abiding sense of the reality and glory of truth, he must meditate upon it till he discovers new grace in its proportions, new life in its lineaments, new loveliness in its beauty; until it becomes in his soul that living principle which is as exhaustless in its nature as it is glorious in the action to which it prompts. *Homer.*

The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an uninterrupted converse with its object, and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as, on the contrary, it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind. *R. Hall.*

Prize the Scriptures, and be more diligent in hearing, reading, meditating on the blessed truths contained therein. The earth is the

fruitful mother of all herbs and plants, yet it must be tilled, ploughed, harrowed, and dressed, else it brings forth little fruit. The Scriptures contain all the grounds of comfort and happiness; but we have little benefit unless daily versed in reading, hearing, and meditation. *Manton.*—But, you will say, "If we had so much time to spare as others, we would not be so unacquainted with the Scriptures; but, alas, we have so much business to do, and our hands so full with our worldly callings, that we hope God will excuse us, though we have not so much knowledge of His Word as others!" This is so far from mending the matter, that thou dost but cover one sin with another. Who gave thee leave thus to overlade thyself with the incumbrance of the world? Is not God the Lord of thy time? Is it not given by Him to be laid out for Him? He allows thee indeed a fair portion thereof for the lower employments of this life; but did He ever intend to turn Himself out of all? *Gurnall.*

God has so ordered it that *the spiritual nutriment of His children is obtained in the performance of Christian duty.* This is the economy of religion. The man who is faithful to the requirements of his God is furnished with so many barriers against temptation, while the negligent and sluggish disarm themselves of every weapon with which they could conquer the spiritual foe. The man who is faithful and diligent in the study of God's Word cannot read those indignant reproofs of sin, and those exposures of its awful consequences, without having his hatred and his dread increased, and the lamp he lights at such an altar will not soon go out. The man who communes daily with God, who pours out to Him his soul in secret penitence, who prays for spiritual strength, will secure the aid for which he asks, will avoid the sin for which he mourns, will be raised above the power of earth by assimilation with the Infinite and Holy. The man who frequents the communion of the saints, in whose soul is a warm tide of Christian sympathy, who watches with fond jealousy for the good of his brethren, will find in turn his own errings kindly traced and reproofed, his own feet recalled by tender and watchful affection, his own soul purified by intimacy with the friends of Jesus. The man who prays and labors for the conversion of sinners shall not only hide, but prevent a multitude of his own sins. He will be more careful for the consistency of his example, and at each temptation to stray, he will be drawn back by

the prospect of injured souls. The man who devotes his property to the service of the Church is not tempted to revel in earthly vanities, or to cling to his treasures with a miser's grasp. And through the whole course of Christian action there is not a duty which does not receive its corresponding reward. But in the man who looks coldly and infrequently upon his Bible, who is a stranger in his closet, who shuns the company of Christ's flock, who has no love for souls, no devotion to the cause of charity, in such a one the principle of holy love is famished for want of nutriment. *Homer.*

Christians, let your inner life, fed and nourished by the indwelling Word of Christ, have, not ostentatious or self-confident, or noisy, but

yet natural, continuous outflow and expression. So, light will come to you from the land of lights. So, you will draw from the infinite ocean of Divine love. It may seem to you, perhaps, that you have very little to express. That is too true of us all. Then you need not call it much; you need not sound a trumpet, or ring a bell, or put out a flag. But, be true, faithful, loving, sincere. Just remember this, that what purifies and refreshes your own life, and guides and cheers you amid the tasks and troubles of this earthly way, will do the same beneficent service for any other human life into which it is received. And remember this, that the constituted way by which this Divine thing does enter into and possess human lives, is by natural communication and outflow from other human lives. *Raleigh.*

PSALM CXIX., 49-64.

VERSES 49-64.

‡ ZAIN.

- 49 REMEMBER the word unto thy servant,
Because thou hast made me to hope.
50 This is my comfort in my affliction :
For thy word hath quickened me.
51 The proud have had me greatly in derision :
Yet have I not swerved from thy law.
52 I have remembered thy judgments of old,
O LORD,
And have comforted myself.
53 Hot indignation hath taken hold upon me,
Because of the wicked that forsake thy law.
54 Thy statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.
55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in
the night,
And have observed thy law.
56 This I have had,
Because I kept thy precepts.

‡ CHETH.

- 57 The LORD is my portion :
I have said that I would observe thy words.
58 I intreated thy favour with my whole heart :
Be merciful unto me according to thy word.
59 I thought on my ways,
And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
60 I made haste, and delayed not,
To observe thy commandments.
61 The cords of the wicked have wrapped me
round ;
But I have not forgotten thy law.
62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto
thee
Because of thy righteous judgments.
63 I am a companion of all them that fear
thee,
And of them that observe thy precepts.
64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy :
Teach me thy statutes.

49. Remember the Word unto Thy servant. This is the proper use of the promises as "arguments wherewith to fill our mouths, when we order our cause before God." When thus pleaded with the earnestness and humility of faith, they will be found to be the blessed

realities of unchanging love. C. B.—They have right to the promises and may justly lay hold upon them who are God's servants; they who apply themselves to obey His precepts, these only can rightly apply His promises to themselves. Make it clear that you are God's ser-

vants, and then these promises are your own, no less than if your name were inserted in the promise, and written in the Bible. *Manton.*

Thou hast caused me to hope. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. God gave the promise in which the Psalmist hoped, and the hope by which he embraced the promise. H.—Every promise in the Word of God let us turn into a prayer. God's promises are His bonds. Sue Him on His bond. He loves that we should wrestle with Him by His promises. Lord, Thou canst as well cease to be God, as deny Thy promise, that is Thyself. "*Lord, remember Thy Word.*" I put Thee in mind of Thy promise, "*whereon Thou hast caused me to hope.*" Thou never failest those that trust in Thee, therefore keep Thy Word to me." *Silbes.*

50. *This is my consolation, that Thy Word hath quickened me.* He felt the reviving, restoring, life-giving power of the Word as he read, as he dwelt upon it and meditated therein, and as he gave himself up to the way of the Word. The believer has all God's unfailing promises to depend upon, and as he depends he gains strength by his own experiences of the faithfulness of the Word. *J. Stephen.*

In my affliction. He was encouraged to plead the Word of promise from the recollection of its "*comfort in his affliction.*" When, therefore, the Word assures us of the presence of God in affliction, of His continued pity and sympathy in His most severe dispensations, and of their certain issue to our everlasting good, must not we say of it, "*This is our comfort in our affliction?*" C. B.—The Word of God has much in it that speaks *comfort in affliction*; but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the Word. If through grace it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy in all conditions and under all events. H.

Thy Word hath quickened me. No spiritual force has come into this world, nor ever will, so great as that which came in Jesus Christ, His life, and Word, and death, and Spirit; and therefore the mighty influence will travel on through the ages of the future as through the ages of the past; nor will it even be consumed in a burning world, or quenched with expiring time, for other worlds and eternal time will receive it. But that general influence is not what, in the ordinary and intelligible sense, we can call "*the Word of Christ.*" This is, manifestly, something which is to be apprehended by our intelligence, to be kept in our memory, which is to operate through the understanding

upon the affections, and the conscience, and the will; which is to shape the habits and rule the life. Such Word of Christ we have only in the Book, which is *all His* now. He has fulfilled it, explained it, inspired it, made it a living Word from first to last, that He might by His Spirit give it living and blessed applications in the guidance and purification of human souls. *Raleigh.*—God's Word, received, loved, obeyed, is the soul's true life. It is not bread, and meat, and drink; it is not self-indulgence of those bodily appetites which the brutes share in common with you that makes your real life. It is love, it is faith, it is obedience, it is communion with God; this is the life the soul is to enjoy; this is the life that triumphs over temptation, that sings in the hour of pain, that feels angelic joy and hears angelic symphonies in the hour of death. *S. W. Fisher.*

52. *Judgments,* in the same sense as throughout the Psalm, God's righteous laws which He revealed of old, which are ever true and ever in force. P.—That which he comforted himself with was the remembrance of God's *judgments of old*, the providences of God concerning His people formerly, both in mercy to them and in justice against their persecutors. God's *judgments of old*, in our own early days and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for He is still the same. H.—It is of the mercy and gracious wisdom of God that so much of His written Word records His "*judgments of old.*" "*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*" C. B.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs. God's statutes are his "*songs,*" which give him spiritual refreshing, sweeten the hardships of the pilgrimage, and measure and hasten his steps. D.—Statutes are things that stand, things that have always stood, and will stand to eternity. These certainties of God are the sources whence comes the inspiration of all true songs. Find and enter the sphere where the eternal realities and eternal laws have their scope, and you are in the home of everlasting song. *J. Pulsford.*

My pilgrimage. If men have been termed pilgrims, and life a journey, then we may add that the Christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in the goodness of the road, the beauty of the prospects, the excellence of the company, and the vast superiority of the accommodation provided for the Christian traveller when he has finished his course. *H. G. Salter.*

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. These have been my pastime, with these I have refreshed my resting hours by the way, and cheered myself onward through the wearisome journey and across the scorching deserts of life. This one hundredth and nineteenth Psalm, which is, in every verse, an ode or hymn in praise of God's law, sufficiently illustrates his meaning. Every man, even the most licentious and reckless, is a pilgrim; the atheist is a pilgrim; such are only a more unhappy class of pilgrims, a reluctant class who are driven across the deserts cheerfully traversed by others, and by the fountains where others quench their thirst. There is a perfect harmony between obligation to God and all the sources of pleasure and happiness God has provided, so that there is no real collision between the statutes over us and the conditions round us. It is only false pleasures that are denied us, those that would brutalize the mind, or mar the health of the body, or somehow violate the happiness of fellow beings round us. *Bushnell.*

The Psalmist knew that he was not at home in this world, but a pilgrim through it, seeking a better country. He did not sigh over this fact, but sang about it. He tells us nothing about his pilgrim sighs, but speaks of his pilgrim songs. Even the palace in which he dwelt was but "*the house of his pilgrimage.*" When we sing in the ways of the Lord it shows that our hearts are in them. Ours are pilgrim Psalms, songs of degrees; but they are such as we may sing throughout eternity; for the statutes of the Lord are the psalmody of heaven itself. S.

Amid defections and haltings, temptations and opportunities to return, the man of a heavenly mind utters his pilgrim's confession by his life, sings his pilgrim-song and goes forward. If his longings had been for mere happiness he would have served the world like the others. But he with opened eye is seeking for a *better country, that is a heavenly.* It is not the extent of his dissatisfaction with the world which leads him on in his chosen course, but the conviction that *there is a better country* to which he can attain. And *it is better* not simply because it promises a greater amount of more lasting good, but because it lays before his hopes *another kind of good*, as different from earthly as possible. This difference between spiritual and temporal good he could not perceive until his eye was opened and his affections transferred. Since that great revolution in his character, weak and tempted and often vacillating as he has been, he has resisted the invitations of the world to re-

turn to his old plan of life, because his desires are fastened on a new object, on the heavenly inheritance, which comprises all that is holy and truly blessed. *Woolsey.*

As the good and great society of the blessed is to be settled in this glorious harmony of law, and the statutes of the Lord are to be the song of their consolidated joy and rest, sing them also here; and, in all life's changes, in the dark days and the bright, in sorrow and patience and wrong, in successes and hopes and consummated labors, everywhere adhere to this, and have it as the strength of your days, that your obligations to God are the best and highest privilege He gives you. *Bushnell.*—Come, then, Christian pilgrim, beguile your journey heavenward by "singing the Lord's song in this strange land." With "*the statutes of God*" in your hand and in your heart, you are furnished with a song for every step of your way. Such songs will smooth your path, and reconcile you to the many inconveniences of the way; while the recollection that this is only "*the house of your pilgrimage*" and not your home; and that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God," will support the exercise of faith and patience to the end. C. B.

55. *Thy name*, as usual, all those qualities of character expressed by the word "name." I have recalled to mind in my night meditations, and so, consequently, under their influence have I kept Thy law. So fitly and sweetly the pious mind turns its thought to God in the stillness of the night-watches and finds itself sustained in keeping God's law. C.—In the day the statutes of God were his *pilgrim song*, in the night his happy meditation. And truly if we can ever spend the waking moments of the night with God, "the darkness is no darkness with us, but the night shineth as the day."

56. *This I had*; this comfort I enjoyed, this support in trouble, this confidence I was enabled to maintain; not this I hoped for, but "*this I had*," it was made my own, *because I kept Thy precepts.* C. B.—I had the comfort of keeping Thy law, because I kept it. God's work is its own wages; a heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do, the more we may do and shall do, in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit is made *more fruitful* (John 15 : 2). H.—As the prophet (Hosea 6 : 3) speaks of the knowledge of God: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord;" that is, if we industriously labor to know God, we shall have this reward, to be made able to know Him more. So he that delights to keep God's law

shall have his reward, to be enabled to keep it more perfectly. *Calamy.*

57. My portion. God is all-sufficient; get Him for your "*portion*," and you have all; then you have infinite wisdom to direct you, infinite knowledge to teach you, infinite mercy to pity and save you, infinite love to care and comfort you, and infinite power to protect and keep you. If God be yours, all His attributes are yours; all His creatures, all His works of providence, shall do you good as you have need of them. He is an eternal, full, satisfactory portion. *J. Mason.*

58. I entreated Thy favor; or, I seek Thy face. To seek the face is to come into the presence. Thus the Hebrews speak when desirous of expressing that familiar intercourse to which God admits His people when He bids them make known their requests. It is truly the same as speaking face to face with God. *Vatablus.*—He prayed *with his whole heart*; as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for; the soul entirely set upon the favor of God is, therefore, importunate for it; *I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.* *H.*

Mercy is the source of that "*favor which we entreat*;" and the Word is the warrant of our expectation, "*Be merciful unto us, according to Thy Word.*" As sinners we need this "*favor.*" As believers we "*entreat*" it in the assurance that praying breath, as the breath of faith, will not be spent in vain. *C. B.*—The rule and ground of confidence is, "*according to Thy Word.*" If we would have favor and mercy from God, it must be upon His own terms. We must ask according to God's will, not without a promise, nor against a command. God is made a voluntary debtor by His promise. These are notable props of faith, when we are encouraged to seek by the offer, and urged to apply by the promise. *Manton.*—The promises are the food of faith and the soul of faith. As faith is the life of a Christian, so the promises are the life of faith. As the promises are of no use without faith to apply them, so faith is of no use without a promise to lay hold on. *Calamy.*

59. "I thought," meditated deeply, pondered upon my past life, and then turned; as the Hebrew verb suggests, in the active sense, *caused* my feet to turn unto Thy testimonies. This might be called a metaphysical statement of genuine, thoughtful conversion. It is described yet more fully in the next verse: "I made haste to keep Thy commandments," and permitted no dangerous, sinful delay. *C.*—He came to the Word, and then he came to himself,

and this made him arise and go to his Father. Consideration is the commencement of conversion; first we think and then we turn. When the mind repents of ill ways the feet are soon led into good ways; but there will be no repenting until there is deep, earnest thought. *S.*

Such is the history of almost all solid conversion. The great destroyer of the souls of men is not so much wilful, deliberate sin as thoughtlessness. At first sinners do not think; then they will not think; at last they cannot think. This is the history of most of mankind; a thoughtless childhood, careless youth, too thoughtful manhood; one half of life without thought, the other with misplaced thought; thoughtful of things of time and sense, thoughtless of Him who made them and of their real selves. *Pusey.*—Consideration is that which we must all come to one time or other. Time will come when we shall consider and cannot help it, when we shall not be able to divert our thoughts from those things which we are now so loath to think upon. Our consciences will take their opportunity to bring our ways to remembrance, when some great calamity or affliction is upon us. And, perhaps, while we are wishing for more time eternity will swallow us up. But, alas! it will then be too late to consider; for then consideration will serve no other purpose but to aggravate our misery and multiply our stings. How much a wiser course would it be to consider these things in time, in order to our eternal peace and comfort; to think of them while we may redress them, and avoid the dismal consequences of them, than when our case is desperate and past remedy? *Archbishop Tillotson.*

Can that truth which sanctifies and saves, which is the weapon of the Spirit and the medium of His grace, produce effects if it is not appropriated and digested by the meditative occupation of our minds with it? What is all the Gospel to you unless it is consciously present to your understanding, and through your understanding is ruling your affections, and moulding your will, and directing and shaping the outgoings of your life? Nothing, nothing! A man may call himself a Christian; but the measure of his Christianity is the occupation of his mind and heart with the truth as it is in Jesus. When we "*taste the good Word of God*" we are made partakers of "*the powers of the world to come.*" Unless there be that occupation of my thoughts with God's Gospel, there is no union between me and it. But the man and the Word of salvation stand over against each other; there the fulness, here the empti-

ness ; there all that I want, here I wanting it all. There is no channel by which that fullness flows into this emptiness unless our thoughts, and by means of them our whole spiritual nature, be occupied with the truth which reveals Christ, and with the Christ whom the truth reveals. A. M.

Turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. Conversion begins in serious consideration. Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways, if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies ? H.—Nothing comes of thinking on our ways if we do not turn from whatever we find to be wrong. Godly sorrow works repentance. A few tears amount to nothing if one goes on to-morrow in the same old paths. It is the man who forsakes his wicked ways and wicked thoughts, and returns to the Lord, who is abundantly pardoned. J. R. M.

This turn is the practical exercise of a genuine faith ; and "because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live ; he shall not die !" Nor is it a few transient thoughts or resolutions that will effect this turn of the heart to God. A man may maintain a fruitless struggle to return to God for many years in sincerity and earnestness, while the simple act of faith in the power and love of Jesus will at once bring him back. Thus, while "thinking on his ways" let him walk in Christ as the way of return, and he will walk in the way of God's testimonies with acceptance and delight. C. B.—*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.* And this would not be done only in the great change of one's first conversion from sin, but this double observance still continued every day, looking to His rule, and laying that rule to His way, and observing where the balk and nonconformity to the rule is, and renewing his repentance for that, and amending it the next day, that still the present day may be the better for yesterday's error. *Leighton.*

Meditation gives depth, seriousness, and earnestness to our religious profession and character. A profession of Christianity is easily made, and the name of Christian is easily assumed. But religion, whatever else it is, is a mode of thought, and hence it is only as deep and earnest thoughtfulness is bestowed upon it that it can be developed in its higher and nobler forms. For want of this, Christianity often appears in its professors as it is not desirable that it should appear. Some there are who never go beyond the elements and alphabet of spiritual truth ; theirs is a superficial Christianity, a gold-leaf

religiousness, genuine so far as it goes, but marvellously attenuated, and not good for much, nor able to endure much. W. L. A.—Meditation on holy things brings one near to God ; but active obedience cements the connection. Meditation which bears fruit in action is good ; but meditation which loses itself in aimless speculation is to be deplored. It is a familiar simile, but a fair one and worth remembering, that the man who thinks about duty, and yet apprehends it not as something involving personal activity, is in danger of spiritual starvation ; just as the man who sits at the dinner-table, thinking about the uses of the food set before him, but not partaking of it, is likely to suffer physical hunger. If we are to walk in the light of God, we must get in the line of Divine progress and keep moving. Humbly striving to do the Father's will results not alone in growth in wisdom, but in growth in strength, in courage and in faith. *Interior.*

It is of great importance that all Christians should strive to unite habits of contemplation and of action. Our feelings ought to flow from the truth. We ought to think, and then to act ; to meditate, and then, under the feelings which that meditation produces, to do our duty. We are to carry out into life what we have treasured up in our contemplations. Our bodies are not made for constant activity, nor our minds, while in connection with the body, for unremitted exertion. We must take time for prayer, for serious and habitual examination, for reflection on the Word and works of God, and to form resolutions of doing good. And we must also find time to act, to be rich in good works, to labor, to let the thoughts and feelings which we have gathered up in the morning, flow out and gladden our path during the day. The human mind is ever running into extremes. In one age it is prone to silent, cold, abstract, unintermitted contemplation, gazing on truth till men become more like statues than living beings. In another age, the tendency is to the other extreme ; it is bustle, restless activity, constant excitement, an inability or unwillingness to think. Men do good, they know not how nor why. They are variable, capricious, going from object to object, not to be depended upon, especially in times of difficulty, and when some great object is to be accomplished. Mere reflection, contemplation unaccompanied by action, is like a deep fountain, which is always closed, always sealed up from public use and enjoyment. Action alone, without reflection, is a summer brook, which runs for a time with great rapidity and violence, but, not being fed

by any living springs, fails in the hour of need, is dry when we are most in want of it. B. B. E.

60. I made haste, and delayed not.

The original word, which we translate "*delayed not*," is amazingly emphatical. I did not stand *what-whatting*; or, as we used to express the same sentiment, *shilly-shallying* with myself; I was *determined*, and so set out. The Hebrew word as well as the English, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice. *Adam Clarke*.—Duty discovered should instantly be discharged. There is peril attending every step which is taken in the indulgence of any known sin, or in the neglect of any acknowledged obligation. A tender conscience will not trifle with its convictions lest the heart should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is unsafe, it is unreasonable, it is highly criminal to hesitate to carry that reformation into effect which conscience dictates. "*I made haste*," said the Psalmist, "*and delayed not to keep Thy commandments*;" that is, being fully convinced of the necessity and excellency of obedience, I instantly resolved upon it, and immediately put it into execution. *J. Morison*.

It is reluctance which usually puts the drag on. Slow obedience is often the germ of incipient disobedience. In matters of prudence and of intellect second thoughts are better than first, and third thoughts, which often come back to first ones, better than second; but in matters of duty first thoughts are generally best. They are the instinctive response of conscience to the voice of God, while second thoughts are too often the objections of disinclination, or sloth, or cowardice. It is easiest to do our duty when we are first sure of it. It then comes with an impelling power which carries us over obstacles on the crest of a wave, while hesitation and delay leave us stranded in shoal water. A. M.

In a matter of eternal life and eternal death, the call is too clear for debate, and there is no room for delay. Many a soul has been lost by waiting for "a more convenient season," a period which probably may never arrive, and which the wilful neglect of present opportunity provokes God to put far away. To-day is God's time. To-morrow ruins thousands. To-morrow is another world. "*To-day, while it is called to-day*; if you will hear His voice," "*make haste, and delay not*." Resolutions, however sincere, and convictions, however serious, "will pass away as the morning cloud and as the early dew," unless they are carefully cherished and instantly improved. The instant movement,

"*making haste, and delaying not*," marks the principle of the spiritual life. Thus was the prodigal's resolution no sooner formed than in action. He said: "I will arise and go to my father, and *he arose*, and came to his father." C. B.

The more we defer, the more difficult and painful our work must needs prove; every day will both enlarge our task and diminish our ability to perform it. We should consider that we are mortal and frail, and, therefore, any designs of future reformation may be cut off by death, which is always creeping toward us, and may, for all we can tell, be very near at hand. *Dr. Barrow*.—Shall we let day after day, year after year, pass over our heads, and we all the time think of nothing but the present; design nothing but just how to live easily here; nay, perhaps, only how to spend that single day which lies so upon our hands that we are at a loss for the employing of it? Why, fools that we are, our sand runs on; it runs apace all this while that we are a-doing nothing; and we know not how soon the glass will be out. And when it is, good God! what follows? Why, eternity; a bottomless gulf of infinity; that which will never have an end; that which is never capable of a change or alteration. Can we think of this and sit still? Is our day, that fatal, dreadful day of death, so certainly, nay, perhaps, so suddenly, a-coming, and can we live unconcerned? Oh! intolerable folly is it to put off the greatest business we have to do in the world, that business which, if it be not taken care of, we are undone forevermore, in hopes of the continuance of a life which we are not certain, no, nor is it possible we should have any certainty, that it will continue for a year; no, nor for a month; no, nor for a day. God Almighty give us grace so to consider these things, that we may all of us immediately "think of our ways, and turn our feet unto His testimonies," that "we may make haste, and without further delay, enter upon the keeping His commandments." *Archbishop Sharp*.

62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks. Cares of this world, impatience of wrongs, a bad conscience, keep awake the ungodly and disturb their sleep (*Rivet*); but what I awake for is to give thanks to Thee. *Fausset*.—How much more fervent would be our prayers; how much more fruitful in blessings, were they enlivened with more abundant delight in the "angelical work of praise." Midnight wakefulness would be far sweeter than slumber; yea, night itself would be turned into day. C. B.

63. I am a companion. He said in the

first verse of this section that God was his portion ; now he saith that all the saints of God are his companions. These two go together, the love of God and the love of His saints. *W. Cowper.*—Those that love the Lord's service naturally associate with kindred spirits, with those that *fear Him, and keep His precepts.* These two features identify the same character, as cheerful obedience is always the fruit of filial fear. These, then, are the Lord's people, and union with Him is companionship with them. The communion of saints is the fruit and effect of communion with God. C. B.—Our love to the saints is *then* sincere when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to Him. H.

64. How does the contemplation of the Lord's "*mercy*" in providence encourage our faith in the expectancy of spiritual privileges ! The goodness or *mercy of God* pervades His whole universe, natural, plentiful, free, com-

municative. And all this mercy flows from Him "in whom" we are not only "blessed with all spiritual blessings," but who is also the medium through which our temporal comforts are conveyed to us. How sweet to eye these mercies, as bought with the precious blood of that munificent Friend who bestows them upon us so richly ; yea, who gives Himself with them all ? C. B.

Teach me. The first verse of this eight is fragrant with full assurance and strong resolve, and this last verse overflows with a sense of the Divine fulness and of the Psalmist's personal dependence. "Thou art my portion, O Lord," is well followed by "teach me." Those who have God for their portion long to have Him for their Teacher. Moreover, those who have resolved to obey are the most eager to be taught. "I have said that I would keep Thy words" is beautifully succeeded by "Teach me Thy statutes." S.

PSALM CXIX., 65-80.

VERSES 65-80.

U TETH.

- 65 THOU hast dealt well with thy servant,
O LORD, according unto thy word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge ;
For I have believed in thy commandments.
67 Before I was afflicted I went astray ;
But now I observe thy word.
68 Thou art good, and doest good ;
Teach me thy statutes.
69 The proud have forged a lie against me :
With my whole heart will I keep thy precepts.
70 Their heart is as fat as grease ;
But I delight in thy law.
71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted ;
That I might learn thy statutes.
72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me
Than thousands of gold and silver.

JOD.

- 73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me :

Give me understanding, that I may learn
thy commandments.

- 74 They that fear thee shall see me and be
glad ;

Because I have hoped in thy word.

- 75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are
righteous,

And that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted
me.

- 76 Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for
my comfort,

According to thy word unto thy servant.

- 77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that
I may live :

For thy law is my delight.

- 78 Let the proud be ashamed ; for they have
overthrown me wrongfully :

But I will meditate in thy precepts.

- 79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me,
And they shall know thy testimonies.

- 80 Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes ;
That I be not ashamed.

65. *Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy Word.* This is the summary of his life, and assuredly it is the sum-

of ours. God hath done all things well. In providence and in grace, in giving prosperity and sending adversity, in everything Jehovah

hath dealt well with us. It is well on our part to tell the Lord that we feel that He hath dealt well with us, for praise of this kind is specially fitting and comely. S.—He knew that God is not weary of well doing, but will finish the thing He hath begun; and, therefore, he pleads past favors. Nothing is more forcible to obtain mercy than to lay God's former mercies before Him. Faith, assuring us that all God's benefits are tokens of His love bestowed on us according to His Word, is bold to ask for more. *R. Greenham.*

66. The *knowledge* meant is that continually prayed for in this Psalm, the knowledge of God's will. The connection of the clauses seems to be that he has faith and would fain have knowledge; he takes God's precepts upon trust, but then prays that he may understand them. A.—Literally, "Teach me goodness of judgment and knowledge," *i.e.*, the very best of their kind, such as Thy Word imparts. "For I have confidence in Thy Word;" I believe it to be from a perfect God, and therefore containing perfect wisdom and knowledge. Coming to Thee with such faith in Thee and in Thy Word, and with such longings to be taught of Thee, Thou wilt not thrust me away! C.—Teach me goodness, discernment, and knowledge; for I have believed or confided in Thy commandments. The principle of pleasing God may be within, and yet the mind may require to be enlightened in all duty; and again, though all duty be known, we may require spiritual discernment to see and feel it aright. *J. Stephen.*—Let all who would be greatly useful offer the prayer of this verse, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge." S.

No school but the school of Christ, no teaching but the teaching of the Spirit can ever give this "*good judgment and knowledge*." Solomon asks it for himself, Paul for his people. Both direct us to God as the sole fountain and author. It is recorded of one of the Reformers, that, when he had well acquitted himself in a public disputation, a friend begged to see the notes which he had been observed to write, supposing that he had taken down the arguments of his opponents and sketched the substance of his own reply. Greatly was he surprised to find that they consisted simply of these ejaculatory petitions—"More light, Lord—more light—more light!" How fully was the true spirit of prayer compressed in these short aspirations! Could they fail of success? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." C. B.

Never yet did there exist a full faith in the Divine Word (by whom *light* as well as immortality was brought into the world), which did not expand the intellect while it purified the heart; which did not multiply the aims and objects of the understanding while it fixed and simplified those of the desires and passions. In our present state it is little less than impossible that the affections should be kept constant to an object which gives no employment to the understanding, and yet cannot be made manifest to the senses. The exercise of the reasoning and reflecting powers, increasing insight, and enlarging views, are requisite to keep alive the substantial faith in the heart. *Coleridge.*

67. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy Word. Though the Word and the Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart that the Word hath easier entrance. *Baxter.*—The sentiment of this verse has been echoed and its very words repeated by godly sufferers of every age—a strong proof that it was meant to be so used. At the same time it furnishes an exquisite description of the effect produced upon the Jews, as a body, by the Babylonish exile, and especially the end which it forever put to their continual lapses into idolatry, by which their early history was characterized, and with respect to which the whole race might well have said, Before I suffered I was (ever) straying. A.

Sorrow is in itself a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hot-house, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigor to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops, with tenfold rapidity, the weltering process of dissolution. So, too, with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay.

It is a fearful thing to see how some men are made worse by trial. It is terrible to watch sorrow as it sours the temper, and works out into malevolence and misanthropy. Opposition makes them proud and defiant. Blow after blow falls upon them, and they bear all in the hardness of a sullen silence. F. W. R.

All depends on the inner state of the one who suffers. Grief is what we make it. It can pro-

duce humility or revolt, can regenerate the heart or render it tenfold worse; it is either an angel, gravely and gently restoring us to the true life; or a demon, beholding, with a cynical smile, all hope dashed to the ground; it opens the sacred stream of our tears of repentance, or it is a consuming fire which scorches and blasts every germ of the future down to the very depth of the soul. It is blessed, or accursed; it produces a new birth, or it destroys. The question, then, is not only whether we are afflicted, but whether that affliction is accepted as coming from God. When trial is accepted in this spirit, it is almost always followed by light. The more humble a man becomes, the more fully God enlightens him. He gets to understand the strange and singular dispensations by which God leads him. He learns to say, not theoretically, but from experience, that all things work together for good to them that love God. The more he advances, the brighter is the light that shines from heaven upon his way, and he feels that this beautiful promise is being realized for him: "The path of the just (why should we not say of the humble?) is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." *E. Bersier.*

Sanctified affliction drives us from the world to God, teaches us to live by faith, warms the spirit in prayer, and urges prayer into supplication. We send up faint prayers in time of prosperity, when halcyon calms are upon our tabernacles; but in stormy times we fly to our Rock, and mourn sore like doves in the cleft of the mountains. *S. Lee.*—Prosperity leaves us to wander, and offers temptations to wandering. Afflictions alarm us and drive us back to the right path. Prosperity casts a glittering but delusive veil over Divine realities, and encourages unbelief. Afflictions rend and destroy this covering, and show us the truths of another world. Prosperity seldom leads to increase of faith. Affliction, by God's blessing, is in many cases made the instrument of sanctification. *J. W. A.*

Did not the merciful hand of God confront us with weariness, disappointment, and trial, did He not prostrate with disease, did He not afflict with pain and bereavement, we should never pause to look inward, to question the spirit that inhabits and impels us, to inquire of its supreme and only vital interests, relations, condition and prospects. It is *suffering* under its varied forms that leads the soul to self-investigation, that impels it to the study of its own nature and destiny. In the silence of sorrow when external things are withdrawn from

attention, the thought is turned inward. Then the soul begins to comprehend its vast capacities of thought, and will, and feeling, of action and happiness. Then first it communes with its aspirations and its weakness, its fears and its hopes. It recognizes its ignorance and its guilt, its necessities and its dangers. Above all, it realizes its relations to God as its Sovereign, Father, Redeemer, and Friend, and is led to seek and find reconciliation with Him. *B.*

68. *Good (art) Thou and doing good, teach me Thy statutes.* Good, both essentially and actively or practically; good in thyself and good to others. The participle denotes habitual, constant action (*ever*) doing good. It is characteristic of this Psalm, that the petition founded on the goodness of God's nature, on His beneficence, and even on His infinite perfection, is still, *Teach me Thy statutes.* Make me acquainted with Thy will, and show me how to do it. *A.*

All the names of God are comprehended in this one of "*Good.*" All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of His goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the object it is exercised about. When He confers happiness without merit, it is grace. When He bestows happiness against merit, it is mercy. When he bears with provoking rebels, it is long-suffering. When He performs His promise, it is truth. When He commiserates a distressed person, it is pity. When He supplies an indigent person, it is bounty. When He succors an innocent person, it is righteousness. And when He pardons a penitent person, it is mercy. All summed up in this one name—Goodness. *C. B.*

Here again we meet with the tacit inference, so beautiful morally, that God being benevolent, full of that goodness which delights in doing good, therefore we may surely trust Him to teach us His statutes for the purpose of moulding us into His own moral image, and so securing to us the highest blessedness possible. *C.*

69. The connection of the clauses is, that all the craft and malice of his enemies should only lead him to obey God with a more undivided heart than ever. With the same surprising skill and wisdom as in many other cases which have been already mentioned, this verse is so framed as to be equally well suited to such national and public evils as those described in the fourth chapter of Ezra, and to the sufferings of the individual writer. *A.*

70. If the heart of these people, who by their slanders make him the caricature of himself, is covered over, as it were, with thick grease

(a figure of insensibility and obduracy), so as to resist all the impressions of God's Word, he, on the contrary, has his delight in God's law. D.

71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. If we have no cross to bear to-day we shall not advance heavenward. A cross (that is, anything that disturbs our peace) is the spur which stimulates, without which we should most likely remain stationary, or blinded with empty vanities sink deeper into sin. A cross helps us onward in spite of our apathy and resistance. Alas, for those who have no daily cross! Alas, for those who repine and fret against it! *Anon.*—There are some things good, but not pleasant, as sorrow and affliction. Sin is pleasant, but unprofitable; and sorrow is profitable, but unpleasant. By affliction the Lord separates the sin that He hates from the soul that He loves. He does not always ordain it to take your spirit out of your flesh, but your flesh out of your spirit. *Secker*

Afflictions are so far from being ground of discomforts that they are rather cordials in the issue, because they advance us more degrees in that knowledge of God which is the means of eternal life. We often learn more of God under the rod that strikes us than under the staff that comforts us. If the sun should perpetually shine in our hemisphere how could we understand God's workmanship in those little spangles of the heavens? Though the night hide from us the beauty of the sun, yet it discovers the brightness and motions of the stars. *Charnock.*

There are no times so likely to lead men to trust in the Everlasting Arms as those in which the arm of flesh fails them utterly; none in which they can learn so truly that their strength is in "quietness and confidence," as those in which they find that the reed on which they have leaned has broken beneath their hand, and pierced it. And we who live in easy circumstances, and to whom, in the common course of things, our daily life brings no hardships or dangers, have great need to remember how very close an utter godlessness may lie to that outward regularity. If we set our hearts on the treasures of earth, or its joys, or put our trust in princes, or in any child of men, we shall discover, sooner or later, that these idols of our souls come between us and God. Our perceptions of the truths which we profess will become ever fainter and dimmer. *Plumptre.*—There is very often some one special, darling, evil thing around which the will is found to wind and fasten itself with passionate clinging. Then we may be sure God sets Himself, not in

any arbitrary way, not in jealousy of our joy, but in the very love wherewith He loves us, and that He may give us all heaven at last to take the idol out. We yield, unwillingly perhaps, at first, though in that case the pain will only be so much the greater. But by all means, at any rate, by ways that we had not known, by dealings that perplex and confound us, He begins to loosen the fatal fascination and take it away. *F. D. H.*

It may not have struck you, but you have been trying to create your own Eden, and it was an Eden with the living God left out. For a time the experiment seemed to prosper, but if it is blighted you have no right to complain; and though it should never blossom again, even the howling wilderness does you a service if it makes you a pilgrim and turns your face to the better land. Affliction is God's message, saying to you, Come home. *Hamilton.*—It may be that thy outward comforts are taken from thee, that God may be all in all to thee. It may be while thou hadst these things they did share with God in thy affections; a great part of the stream of thy affection ran that way. Now the Lord would not have the affections of His children to run waste; He does not care for other men's affections, but thine are precious, and God would not have them run waste. So those affections that run toward the creature God would have them run toward Himself, that so He may be all in all to thee here in this world. And a gracious heart can indeed tell how to enjoy God so as that God shall be all in all to it; that is the happiness of heaven to have God to be all in all. *Burroughs.*

Saved by suffering, not saved from it; that is the law of life revealed in Christ, the disciple's prayer, the sufferer's consolation. Character depends on inward strength. But this strength has two conditions: it is increased only by being put forth, and it is tested only by some resistance. So, if the spiritual force or character in you is to be strong, it must be measured against some competition. It must enter into conflict with an antagonist. Suffering, then, in some of its forms, must be introduced, the appointed minister, the great assayist, to put the genuineness of faith to the proof, and purify it of its dross. What special form it shall take for each, it is for God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, to decide. Marys and Marthas must weep, the world over; the sorrows of Bethany be revived in the homes of distant centuries and undiscovered countries, till the lengthening sisterhood of suffering clasps hands around the globe. Many Mat-

thews, by the Atlantic and Pacific, as well as by the shore of Tiberias, must part with profits and gains for an unreserved apostleship. The most generous and beautiful children—the manliest sons and loveliest daughters—must be buried out of some families; and in others ingratitude or vice must spread a far more dreadful mourning. And because, in the mystery of God's forebought, some souls are to have tasks and stations of peculiar honor offered them in His kingdom, from these one after another of the dearest and most delicious joys must vanish, light after light be quenched, till *all* are gone. Uncongenial companionships, unreasonable tempers, unreturned affections, unrealized ideals of goodness, unforeseen calamities to property, pinching poverty, slow disorders that overcloud the spirits or tire out patience; I need not enumerate the legions of ever-active and unwelcome ministers, abroad and busy throughout men's dwellings, never invited, yet forcing their way in, made necessary by the weakness of our faith, ordained to discipline us into independence of the world, into heirship in immortality. F. D. H.

It may be said that none of us are at our best save through God's ministry of sorrow to us, and in us, and through us; and that the measure of our tenderness, of our sympathy, of our practical helpfulness, and of our abiding and prevailing faith, corresponds with the measure of our wise improvement of our personal sorrows. And every truly admirable personal character, every great and noble character, every most winsome character, is a character which has known sorrow, and which has secured the gain of sorrow through the acceptance and improvement of sorrow in its noblest ministry. Our one Pattern of character and of attainment was "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and it is divinely declared that it was needful that He should be made "perfect"—should be brought to the highest conceivable standard of character—"through sufferings." God says to every child of His love, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." And every sorrow-smitten child of God will, sooner or later, have reason to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." S. S. T.

There have been many books that treat of the sympathy of sorrow, but only one that bids us glory in tribulation, and count it all joy when we fall into divers affliction, that so we may be associated with that great fellowship of suffering of which the incarnate Son of God is the head, and through which He is carrying a re-

demptive conflict to a glorious victory over evil. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. *H. B. Stowe*.—"Through the discipline of trial alone men have been trained to thought and action, to endurance and achievement. Truth, best known to the profoundest, devoutest student of the works of mind, it is that the greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers, the grandest energies of the greatest actors and reformers, have all passed through the fire of tribulation. Truth it is that the greatest poets have "learned in suffering what they taught in song." So "*all* the foremost worthies of the world, all the spiritual heroes of our race," *all* that have triumphantly battled against the false and the wrong, that have successfully toiled and striven for the truth and the right have, like their Divine Master, been men of sorrow and acquainted with grief. B.

72. The law of Thy mouth. A sweetly expressive name for the Word of God. It comes from God's own mouth with freshness and power to our souls. We do well to look upon the Word of the Lord as though it were newly spoken into our ear; for in very truth it is not decayed by years, but is as forcible and sure as though newly uttered. S.—**Is better unto me.** The Word of God must be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, sweeter to us than our liberty, and pleasanter to us than all earthly comforts. *J. Mason*.—**Than thousands of gold and silver.** Worldly riches are gotten with labor, kept with care, lost with grief. They are farthest from us when we have most need of comfort, as all worldlings find in the hour of death. Far otherwise with the Word of God; if we will lay it up in our hearts, as Mary did, its comfort shall sustain us when all other comfort shall fail. This it is that makes us rich unto God, when our souls are storehouses, filled with the treasures of His Word. *W. Cowper*.

You cannot carry the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in your memory every day, and all day long. Nor is there need. We do not need *all* the Bible every day. The world needs it all. Individually we need it as we need corn in the granary; as we need clothes in the wardrobe; as in a journey we need the hostel or wayside house to rest in when we come to it; as we need the boat to take us over the broad river which we can neither ford nor swim; as we need the lamp to go through the wood by night; as we need the guide across the mountains to the distant city. There is many a chapter and many a precious verse in the Bible, which lies thus in reserve for us. We glance

at them to-day with a sincere but only a general interest, as knowing that they form part of the great treasure of Divine truth given to the world; but the day will come, and may be near, when perhaps those chapters will be better unto us than thousands of gold and silver, and we shall read them through our tears. *Raleigh.*

73. *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.* In the vast universe of wonder, man is the greatest wonder—the noblest work of God. Every part of creation bears the impress of God. Man—man alone—bears His image, His likeness. Everywhere we see His track—His footsteps. Here we behold His face. What an amazing thought, that the three eternal subsistents in the glorious Godhead should have united in gracious design and operation toward the dust of the earth! Thus man was formed—thus was he raised out of his parent dust, from this low original, to be the living temple and habitation of Divine glory—a being full of God. C. B.

It is nearness, not distance, that the name Creator implies; and the simple fact of His having *made* us is the assurance of His desire to bless us and to hold intercourse with us. Communication between the thing made and its maker is involved in the very idea of creation. "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments.*" "Faithful Creator" is His name (1 Pet. 4: 19), and as such we appeal to Him, "Forsake not the work of Thine own hands." *H. Bonar.*

That I may learn Thy commandments. That he might *learn* them so as to know the sense and meaning of them, their purity and spirituality; and so as to do them from a principle of love, in faith, and to the glory of God; for it is not a bare learning of them by heart nor a mere theory of them, but the practise of them in faith and love, which is here meant. *John Gill.*

74. The goodness of God to one becomes the joy and comfort of all. What an excitement is this to close communion with our God, that the light which we thus receive will shine on those around us! What a comfort will it be in our own hour of temptation, if the hope we may then be enabled to maintain in the Word of God shall prove the stay, not only of our own souls, but of the Lord's people! C. B.

75. God ordered all that befell him, and he loved to think so. He expresses a sure and happy confidence in all that God did, and would do, with regard to him. He trusted fully in God's wisdom, God's power, God's

love. "*I know Thy judgments are right*"—quite right, perfectly wise and good. He shows the firmest persuasion of this. "*I know*," he says, not merely, "*I think*." But these very words, "*I know*," clearly show that this was a matter of faith, not of sight. For he does not say, "*I can see that Thy judgments are right*," but "*I know*." *And that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* This means that in appointing trouble as his lot God had dealt with him in faithfulness to His Word, faithfulness to His purposes of mercy, with a faithful, not a weak love. He had sent him just what was most for his good, though not always what was most pleasing; and in this He had shown Himself faithful. Gently and lovingly does the Lord deal with His children. He gives no unnecessary pain; but that which is needful He will not withhold. *F. Bourdillon.*—Affliction and trouble are not only consistent with God's love plighted in the covenant of grace; but they are parts and branches of the new-covenant administration. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. The conduct of His providence is one part of the covenant engagement; He hath promised to His people to use such discipline as conduceth to their safety. In short, the cross is not an exception to the grace of the covenant, but a part of the grace of the covenant. *Manton.*

As God makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest, the frost of winter as well as the heat of summer; so doth He of fair and foul, pleasing and unpleasing providences, for promoting holiness. Winter-providences kill the weeds of lusts, and summer-providences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness. When He afflicts, 'tis for our profit, to make us partakers of His holiness. When He deals more gently in His providences, and lets His people sit under the sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, 'tis to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness. *Gurnall.*

The hand which in faithfulness cuts, and often cuts deeply, is the hand of love, since it cuts away proud flesh, which, if left alone, would kill us. The rough hand which suddenly plucks us back from the edge of a precipice, is the hand of love, not of wrath. The Psalmist so understood it when he wrote, "*In very faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me.*" *Tribulation*, then, does not separate the Christian from the love of Christ, but is really an evidence of its existence. *Anon.*—It is good

for a man to be checked, crossed, disappointed, made to feel his own ignorance, weakness, folly; made to feel his need of God; to feel that, in spite of all his self-confidence, he is no better off in this world than in a dark forest, unless he has a Father in heaven who loves him with an eternal love, and a Holy Spirit in heaven who will give him a right judgment in all things, and a Saviour in heaven who can be touched with the feeling of his infirmities. *C. Kingsley.*

When we begin to learn from the Scriptures that God is a God of love and tender compassion; that His very stripes are awakening us to fly; that He doth not willingly afflict and grieve, that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; when behind the lifted rod we discern a Father's tears; and when, as being in covenant, we consider that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world; that they are not by chance, but appointed with the full consent of Him who stands by the throne, and who loved us so that He died for us, and is now our Guardian, Trustee, Surety, Advocate, and Husband—when we find that He had brought us into this wilderness with an intention, and hedges up our way with preventive tenderness—the desert begins to smile; the thirsty waste seems moist with springs of water; the sandy plain appears newly clad with trees of pleasure; the “land is as the Garden of Eden;” the voice of the Lord is heard among the trees of the garden; after sultry heats, the cool of the evening reveals the form of the Shepherd; He leadeth us beside the still waters. *J. W. A.*

76. Even when a man recognizes that affliction is sent in “faithfulness,” that God has a wise purpose of love in sending it, still it is in itself bitter, and therefore he prays that he may have God’s “lovingkindness” and His “tender mercies” as his comfort in the midst of affliction. *P.*—The whole earth in its brightest visions of fancy, destitute of the Lord’s love, can never cheer nor revive the tried soul. Unless the Lord meets us and blesses us with His “merciful kindness for our comfort,” it is “a thirsty land where no water is.” *C. B.*

77. *Let Thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.* First he sought mercy to forgive his sins; then he sought mercy to comfort him in his troubles; now he seeks mercy to live and sin no more. Alas! many seek the first mercy of remission, and the second mercy of consolation in trouble, who are altogether careless of the third mercy, to live well. It is a

great mercy of God to amend thy life; where this is not, let no man think he hath received either of the former. It is a great mercy of God, which not only pardons evil that is done, but strengthens to further good. *W. Cowper.*

79. Those that fear Thee . . . shall know. Fear and knowledge make up a godly man. Knowledge without fear breedeth presumption, and fear without knowledge breedeth superstition. Knowledge must direct fear, and fear must season knowledge; then it is a happy mixture and composition. *Manton.*—The saints are God-fearing and God-knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion. When fearing and knowing walk hand in hand they cause men to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If these are my choice companions I may hope that I am one of their order. *S.*

80. As the preservative from *shame*, he prays for a *sound heart*, filled with solid principle, delivered into the mould of the world; like the sacrifices of the law, entire for God. Often had he prayed for Divine teaching, now he begs for *soundness in the Lord’s statutes*. How many “have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience,” from an unsound heart! An unsound professor knows nothing of the true spirit of adoption, nothing of that holy familiarity with which a child of God unbosoms himself to his heavenly Father; and if he preserves an empty name in the Church, he will be *put to shame* before the universe of God. But the “*sound heart*” is connected with “a hope that maketh not ashamed”—the full blessing of scriptural confidence. *C. B.*

First and foremost among the products of the ages of the hidden life is this great Psalm. To the literary critic it has all the notes of a silver age. Its structure is artificial, its language stereotyped, its length excessive, its thought monotonous. It might be almost the latest utterance of the dying voice of Hebrew psalmody. And yet the words of this nameless sufferer epitomize exhaustively the religious aspirations and joys and sorrows of the human soul, and have remained, and will remain, without doubt, to the end of time, the great manual of Christian devotion. And we may well strengthen our wavering faith by looking as boldly as did the Psalmist at the spiritual fruitfulness of sorrow, and ask ourselves whether we are making our own sorrows bear their fruit. *J. R. Illingworth.*

PSALM CXIX., 81-96.

VERSES 81-96.

C CAPH.

- 81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation :
But I hope in thy word.
- 82 Mine eyes fail for thy word,
While I say, When wilt thou comfort me ?
- 83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke ;
Yet do I not forget thy statutes.
- 84 How many are the days of thy servant ?
When wilt thou execute judgment on them
that persecute me ?
- 85 The proud have digged pits for me,
Who are not after thy law.
- 86 All thy commandments are faithful :
They persecute me wrongfully ; help thou
me.
- 87 They had almost consumed me upon earth ;
But I forsook not thy precepts.
- 88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness ;
So shall I observe the testimony of thy
mouth.

81. HE had living faith in his heart, though he fainted for the joy and comfort of faith ; he believed the Word of grace and salvation, and he hoped for the fulfilment of the promises of his Lord, to the reviving of his soul ; he honors his Lord's Word, trusts in His faithfulness, and casts the anchor of his hope upon His truth.
W. Mason.

Salvation! What music is there in that word, music that never tires, but is always new, that always rouses yet always rests us ! It holds in itself all that our hearts would say. It is sweet vigor to us in the morning, and in the evening it is contented peace. It is a song that is always singing itself deep down in the delighted soul. Angelic ears are ravished by it up in heaven ; and our eternal Father Himself listens to it with adorable complacency. It is sweet even to Him out of whose mind is the music of a thousand worlds. To be saved ! What is it to be saved in the fullest and utmost meaning ? Who can tell ? Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. It is a rescue, and from such a shipwreck ! It is a rest, and in such an unimaginable home ! It is to lie down forever in the bosom of God, in an endless rapture of insatiable contentment. *F. W. Faber.*

I hope in Thy Word. That hope

L LAMED.

- 89 For ever, O LORD,
Thy word is settled in heaven.
- 90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations :
Thou hast established the earth, and it
abideth.
- 91 They abide this day according to thine ordi-
nances ;
For all things are thy servants.
- 92 Unless thy law had been my delight,
I should then have perished in mine afflic-
tion.
- 93 I will never forget thy precepts ;
For with them thou hast quickened me.
- 94 I am thine, save me ;
For I have sought thy precepts.
- 95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy
me ;
But I will consider thy testimonies.
- 96 I have seen an end of all perfection ;
But thy commandment is exceeding broad.

which is grounded on the Word gives rest to the soul ; 'tis an anchor to keep it steady. Which shows the unmovableness of that which our anchor is fastened to. The promise sustains our faith, and our faith is that which supports us. A believer throws the whole weight of all his affairs and concerns, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, upon the promises of God. *Cruso.*—Believe under a cloud, and wait for Him when there is no moonlight or starlight. Let faith live and breathe, and lay hold of the sure salvation of God, when clouds and darkness are about you. Who dreameth that a promise of God can fail, fall aswoon, or die ? When we are pleased to seek a plea with Christ, let us plead that we hope in Him.
Rutherford.

82. Faith may be exercised in not seeing His reasons, not being able to harmonize His promises with His providences, or His outward dispensations with His Divine perfections. But let us leave this to Him, and "be still, and know that He is God." Waiting time—whatever weariness may attend it—is precious time, and not a moment of it will be lost. He waits, not because He is reluctant to give, but that we may be fitted to receive. *C. B.*

When wilt Thou comfort me ? Complain not

of God, but to God. Complaints of God give a vent to murmuring ; but complaints to God, to faith, hope, and patience. *Manton.*

The Scriptures are given to us, not primarily for comfort, but for guidance and instruction ; and comfort is a resultant of obedience to the instruction. Because we are "compassed with infirmity," and because we "have not passed this way heretofore," God has very graciously given us His Word as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path ; and it is by taking heed to this light that our feet are to be kept in the path of peace, no matter where it leads. "If you keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love ;" and abiding in Christ's love the Christian finds his fullest comfort. *F. E. Smith.*

83. He does not suffer anything to banish God's Word out of His consciousness, although he has become like a leathern bottle shrivelled in the smoke. A leathern bottle which was not to be immediately used they hung up aloft ; and that it was exposed there to the ascending smoke is intelligible from the absence of a chimney. The point of the comparison is that they have set him aside, and that he, as a sort of drudge, is continually exposed to the exactions of his persecutors. *D.*—When his soul was fainting, his hope in the Word kept him from sinking. Under the further continuance of the trial, the same recollection gives him support, yet I do not forget Thy statutes. *C. B.*

86. All Thy commandments are faithful. Whatever the command might cost him it was worth it ; he felt that God's way might be rough, but it was right ; it might make him enemies, but still it was his best friend. He believed that in the end God's command would turn out to his own profit, and that he should be no loser by obeying it. *S.*

Help Thou me. "God help me" is an excellent, comprehensive prayer ; it is a pity it should ever be used lightly and as a by-word. *H.*—This is a golden prayer, as precious as it is short. It suits a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin. "Help, Lord," will be a fitting prayer for labor and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all-sufficient, and we cast ourselves upon it without fear. *S.*

88. The quickening he seeks is the "renewing day by day of the inner man," of which the apostle speaks. As spiritual life is first given, so is it continued by the ceaseless process of Divine quickening. And as its source is the lovingkindness of God, so its effects are steadfast obedience to His revealed will. *B.*—He

had prayed before, *Quicken me in Thy righteousness* (v. 40) ; but here, *Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness.* The surest token of God's good-will toward us is His good work in us. *H.*

89. We have arrived at the centre of the Psalm, and the thread of the connection is purposely broken off. The substance of the first eleven strophes has evidently been : "Hitherto hath the Lord brought me ; shall it be that I now perish ?" To this the eleven succeeding strophes make answer, "The Lord's Word changeth not ; and in spite of all evil forebodings, the Lord will perfect concerning me the work that He hath already begun." *Thrupp.*

Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven. These words are usually rendered as making but one proposition ; but the accent showeth there are two branches ; the one asserting the eternity of God ; the other, the constancy and permanency of His Word. It implyeth that as God is eternal, so is His Word, and that it hath a fit representation both in heaven and in earth ; in heaven, in the constant motion of the heavenly bodies ; in earth, in the consistency and permanency thereof ; that as His Word doth stand fast in heaven, so doth His faithfulness on earth, where the afflictions of the godly seem to contradict it. *Manton.*

89-91. Thy Word is, as it were, anchored to Thy throne, made fast and sure where no such changes as those of earth and earthly things can ever reach it. Hence it is safe to say, Thy faithfulness extends to all generations ; no lapse of time, no passing away of human generations can weaken its stability. Just as Thou hast made the earth fast and it abideth, so are Thy promises made fast and will abide to the end. *C.*

The law of God and the Word of His promise endure the same forever ; but they have been revealed in several manners, according to the dispensation of times. For the law was first imprinted in that remnant of light of nature, which was left after the fall, being sufficient to accuse. Then it was more manifestly expressed in the written law ; and was yet more opened by the prophets ; and, lastly, expounded in the true perfection, by the Son of God, the great Prophet, and perfect Interpreter, as also Fulfiller of the law. That likewise the Word of the promise was manifested and revealed, first, by immediate revelation and inspiration ; after, by figures, which were of two natures : the one, the rites and ceremonies of the law ; the other, the continual history of the old world and Church of the Jews ; which, though it be literally true, yet it is pregnant of a perpetual

allegory and shadow of the work of the redemption to follow. The same promise or evangel was more clearly revealed and declared by the prophets, and then by the Son Himself, and, lastly, by the Holy Ghost, which illuminateth the Church to the end of the world.
Bacon.

Nowhere do we find the ideas of natural law and order more distinctly set forth than in the Old Testament. It is, indeed, never parted from the Divine personality, but it is true law notwithstanding. It may not be scientifically known in its linked details, yet still there is the unmistakable recognition of an *order of things*, settled, firm, and universal. Long before the name of the Newtonian gravitation was even heard of, the Psalmist had said: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in the heavens;" "all things stand according to Thine ordinances." *T. Lewis.*

Law itself is forever inflexible. Does not the Scripture declare that He who made a "covenant with day and night" has established common "ordinances of heaven and earth," that He has made "a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder," that He has "made a weight for the winds," that He has "shut up the sea with doors, and said, Hitherto shall thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" that "the stork in heaven knoweth her appointed time." Law is indeed inflexible, for He who "hath the earth upon nothing," and hath "established it that it cannot be moved" (that is, "totter," in going), who "bringeth forth the Zodiacal signs" in their order and "guideth Arcturus and his sons," who hath set the "stars in their courses," these heavenly movements being revealed by parallax or "shadow" of their "turning," is Himself "the Father of lights, with whom is no parallax" (see the Greek) "nor shadow of turning." The flood of worlds flows on, but "the Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King forever." "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." *J. B. Thomas.*

90. *To generation and generation (is) Thy faithfulness; Thou hast fixed the earth and it stands.* Resolved into our idiom, the meaning of this verse is, that the truth of God's promises, or His fidelity to His engagements, is secured by the same Divine perfection which brought the world at first into existence and has ever since preserved it. *A.*—This accordance, in point of stability and sureness, between the utterances of God's Word and the ordinances or laws of God's world, teaches us to rely with as great security on the fulfilment

of Bible promises and Bible declarations as on the constancy of nature. Let me be as settled, O God, in the truth of Thy Word as I am in the anticipations of light in the morning, or of the courses of the sun and moon in the firmament. Thus may I be settled and grounded in the hope of the Gospel, so as never to be moved away from it. Against all the likelihoods and fears of nature let me ever maintain a steadfast faith in the faithfulness of God. *Chalmers.*

It abideth. Creation is as the mother, and Providence the nurse which preserveth all the works of God. God is not like man; for man, when he hath made a work cannot maintain it; he buildeth a ship, and cannot save it from shipwreck; he edifies a house, but cannot keep it from decay. It is otherwise with God; we daily see His conserving power upholding His creatures; which should confirm us that He will not cast us off, nor suffer us to perish (since we are the works of His hands) if we so depend upon Him, and give Him glory as our Creator, Conservor, and Redeemer. *W. Cowper.*—In upholding the frame of the world those attributes are seen which are a firm stay to a believer's heart, such as wisdom, power, and goodness. The covenant of grace is as sure as the covenant made after the deluge. We cannot look upon this earth without seeing therein a display of those same attributes which confirm our faith in waiting upon God till His promises be fulfilled to us. *Manton.*

91. *They continue this day according to Thine ordinances.* Which of the works of God are not pervaded by a beautiful order? Think of the succession of day and night. Think of the revolution of the seasons. Think of the stars as they walk in their majestic courses, one great law of harmony "binding the sweet influence of the Pleiades, and guiding Arcturus with his sons." Look upward, amid the magnificence of night, to that crowded concave—worlds piled on worlds—and yet see the calm grandeur of that stately march; not a discordant note there to mar the harmony, though wheeling at an inconceivable velocity in their intricate and devious orbits! These heavenly sentinels all keep their appointed watch-towers. These Levites in the upper firmament light their altar fires "at the time of the evening incense," and quench them again when the sun, who is appointed to rule the day, walks forth from his chamber. "They continue this day according to Thine ordinances; for all are Thy servants." *J. R. Macduff.*

In this vast universe, "all are His servants." "The stars in their courses," "fire and hail,

snow and vapors, stormy winds" fulfil His Word. Is not then the universe of nature a parable of grace, setting out on every side, in every view, a cheering display of *the faithfulness of God*? If His providence fails not, will the promise of His covenant disappoint us? C. B.—The precise and accurate movements of nature are corroborations of the changeless constancy of revealed truth. The *moral* is higher and greater than the *natural*. The handiwork of God furmishes but the theatre for the display of His eternal wisdom and love. This visible world is the instrument, the mechanism by means of which the Supreme accomplishes His great moral designs. The verities of Revelation present the vast and worthy end for which the worlds were made, and to which all that is made is subservient; and no one has yet learned to study and collate the *works* of God aright, who does not regard them as auxiliary to the grand purposes of His Word. The Son of God has carried this idea to its highest form of expression when He said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of My Word shall fail." The truthfulness of nature will be falsified long before the truthfulness of Scripture. The confidence which man reposes in the stability of the earth and the regularity of the heavens will be disappointed, before any disappointment shakes the faith of those who trust in the Word of their Maker. The stars will break from their orbits in wild confusion, and the earth will be moved out of its place, before there is detected any deflection, uncertainty, or irregularity in that eternal law and Gospel of God for which the stars and the earth were created. W. Adams.

92. The support of the Word is as sure as its basis, and that in the time when other supports sink—in *affliction*. One promise applied by the Spirit of God is worth ten thousand worlds. And each promise is a staff, if we have but faith to lean upon it, able to bear our whole weight of sin, care, and trial. Well might Luther say, "I have covenanted with my Lord, that He should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary both for this life and that which is to come." C. B.

93. *With them Thou hast quickened me.* The quickening Spirit delights to work by means of the Word; but though the Word be the means, yet the benefit comes from God: "For with them *Thou* hast quickened me." Life comes from the fountain of life. There is a double quickening, when from dead we are made liv-

ing; or when from cold, and sad, and heavy we are made lively, and so not only have life, but enjoy it more abundantly, according to Christ's gracious promise; that they may be living, lively, kept still in vigor. *Manton*.—The secret mysteries of a Divine life, of a new nature, of Christ formed in our hearts, cannot be written or spoken; language and expressions cannot reach them; neither can they be ever truly understood, except the soul itself be kindled from within and awakened into the life of them. He is not a true Christian that is book-taught, but he that is God-taught; he that has "an unction from the Holy One" that teaches him all things; he that has the Spirit of Christ within him that searcheth out the deep things of God. *Cudworth*.

94. I am Thine. This is an excellent motive to draw from the Lord help in trouble. Thine by *creation*, I was made by Thee; Thine by *adoption*, I was assigned over to Thee; Thine by *donation*, I was given to Thee; Thine by *marriage*, I was espoused to Thee; Thine by *redemption*, I was purchased by Thee; Thine by *stipulation*, I have vowed myself unto Thee. *R. Greenham*.—There is this encouragement and strength that the spirit of a man receives in thus arguing with God, *that if he can say in truth, "I am Thine," God much more will say to the creature, "I am thine."* If we have so much love to offer ourselves to God, to become His; much more will the love of God make Him to become ours; for God loves first, most, and surest. If mine heart rise toward God, much more is the heart of God toward me; because there love is in the fountain. *J. Symonds*.

Submission to God implies that we justify Him in everything that He does, that we approve all He does, and that we cleave to Him in the midst of all. It is as full of keen sensibility as of mighty self-denial. It is as tender as it is strong. It never questions, but it feels. It says, "Thy will be done," and says it honestly. *Anon*.—Submission is the soul's real and practical acknowledgment of God's supreme majesty; it is its homage to its Maker, its self-dedication, than which nothing more suits the state of a creature or the spirit of a saint. It is that by which the blessed soul becomes in its own sense a consecrated and devoted thing, sacred to God, having its very life and being referred and made over to Him. *Howe*.—It says: Demand, enjoin, forbid; what wilt Thou have me to do? What wilt Thou have me to bear? exalted, abased, comforted, suffering, employed in Thy work, use-

less in everything ; I shall ever adore Thee equally, by sacrificing all self-will to Thine. I have nothing left, but in all things to say with Mary, "Be it unto me according to Thy Word." *Fénelon.*

If we really believed that God, of, and by, and in Himself, could make us happy ; if we could learn to trust Him, and be content with Him apart from His gifts, in the deep conviction that He is more and better than them all ; if, in our jealousy for His honor, and in our appreciation of His character, and in our sympathy with His purposes, and in our gratitude for His cross, we could come to have more of His mind about sin, more to understand His intense hatred and horror of it, more, with Him, to pity and yearn over the lost, more to perceive and know that the very greatest loss a human being can suffer is the loss of His image and presence, we should more cheerfully and readily cast ourselves into His arms, and yield ourselves to His purposes ; we should say more continually, more fervently, more honestly, than most of us can say now, "Do what Thou wilt with me, only love me ; and give me the power of loving Thee in return !" *Thorold.*

95. If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, he has met with poor success in his assaults. *S.*

96. He knows from experience that all (earthly) perfection has an end (inasmuch as, when it has reached its climax, it changes into its opposite) ; God's command, on the contrary, is broad beyond all measure, unlimited both in respect of its duration and verification. *D.*—The verse exhibits a contrast between the measurable perfection of things that belong to man's earthly existence and needs, and the immeasurable perfection, the surpassing breadth, of the law of God, as the expression of His excellency, between finite and infinite perfection. *De Witt.*

I have seen an end of all perfection : but Thy commandment is exceeding broad. It is not difficult, at least for an earnest and thoughtful person, to see "an end of all perfection" among men ; and here below nothing comes to perfection. But we are reminded that there is something else that does not come to an end, something that cannot be exhausted, lost, depreciated, something that rises above us immeasurably high, and stretches away around us immeasurably far, with which, too, we are in vital relations from which we can never be released. "Thy

commandment is exceeding broad." This commandment extends over all the universe of intelligent life, higher and lower, over angels of every rank and men of every color and clime, over them, again, in no merely external way, for restraint and direction, but over all intelligence, over all responsibility, over all emotion, over all motive, and of course over words, and action, and conduct. *Raleigh.*

God's commandments are of a vast latitude—beyond our apprehension. They are so deep that none can fathom them (Psalm 36 : 6) ; so high that they are established in heaven (v. 48) ; so long that they endure forever, and so broad that none can measure them. They are not only "broad," but "exceeding broad ;" higher than heaven, longer than the earth, broader than the sea. The commands of God reach the inward parts, the most secret motions and retired recesses of the soul. They reach all the privy thoughts, they pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. They reach to all our actions : to those that seem smallest and of less concernment, as well as to those that are greater and of more concernment. *Swinnock.*

"Exceeding broad." It is so, by the comprehensive applicableness of its grand, simple rules. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." It is so by the ample order of its special injunctions. It is so by laying an authoritative hand on the first principles and origin from which anything can proceed in human spirit and action ; then it reaches to all things that do or can proceed thence. It asserts a jurisdiction over all thought and inward affection. All language is uttered under this same jurisdiction. Even over what is not done it maintains its authority, and pronounces its dictates and judgments. It is a positive thing with respect to what is negative, omission, non-existence. Let a man look back on all his omissions, and think what the Divine law can raise from them against him. Thus the law, in its exceeding breadth, is vacant nowhere ; it is not stretched to this wide extent by chasms and void spaces. If a man could find one such, he might there take his position for sin with impunity, if not with innocence. *Foster.*

If it were possible that thou couldst break the connection of sin, so as to take off one link that pleaseth thee best, and not draw the whole chain after thee by committing this, yet know there is a connection of guilt also. "Whoso-

ever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." A man cannot stab any part of the face, but he will disfigure the whole countenance, and wrong the whole man. Thus the law is copulative; an affront done to one redounds to the dishonor of all, and so is resented by God the Lawgiver, whose authority is equally in all. *Gurnall*.—If we would be complete in our Christian profession, we must attend to *all* the virtues of it; whatever things are true, honest, just, or lovely, as well as those sublimer things which more immediately respect God and Christ, and heaven and eternity. The beauty of the Christian character is not formed so much by the gigantic size of one virtue, as from the harmony and consistency of all. Never, then, let it appear which virtue has been most approved by you, but cultivate *every* virtue. *R. Hall*.

As there is more mercy in the Gospel than we are able to comprehend, so there is more holiness in the law than we are able to comprehend. No man ever saw into the depths of that righteousness. There is an infinite holiness in the law. *Caryl*.—The spirituality of its requirements illustrates its Divine "*perfection*." An angry look is murder; an unchaste desire is adultery; "*covetousness*" in the heart is idolatry; the thought as well as the act, the first conception of sin, as well as the after commission, brings in the verdict—Guilty. Can we, then, endure the sight of its "*exceeding breadth*"? Yes, for the *commandment* of the Gospel is equally *broad*, and covers all. We know who hath stood in our place, who hath satisfied Sinai's unalterable requirements, and borne its awful curse. *Broad* as it may be, the love which hath fulfilled it is immeasurable. As a covenant, therefore, it has now lost its terrors. As a rule, we love it for its extent and for its purity; for the comprehensiveness of its obligations, and for the narrowness of its liberty for indulgence; nor would we wish to be subject to a less severe scrutiny, or a more lenient administration. *C. B.*

The law or commandment is "*exceeding broad*" because it is Gospel. It is an education, a development, a joy that never palls, a prospect that is never darkened, although our eyes are not always open to see it. This commandment of God, with the Gospel in it, is the very soul of consideration, and tenderness, and grace. It drops down rest on the weary, and brings balm to the wounded, and breathes fresh hope into despairing hearts. It seems to speak to us as though it were God, and says, "Cast all your cares on Me. I am broad enough and

strong enough to bear them all." *Raleigh*.—God will never take back the fair and perfect ideal of human life depicted in His law, never retract His purpose to raise the life of man till it touches and fulfils its ideal. And so the very law which is our despair is our comfort also; for if *that* be perfect *we* must become perfect; its perfection is the pledge of ours. *Expositor*.

Where God Himself exists and acts there as a counterpart and twin-presence lives and acts His immutable and perfect law. Emanating from Him, that law goes forth as an impersonation of all that is majestic, good, and glorious in His being, attributes, and character. As His vicegerent it stands everywhere a personal, living presence and power, holding forth the glittering sceptre of universal, Divine dominion over the myriads of created spirits peopling the immensity of space. And voluntarily or involuntarily, its sway is acknowledged above and below, in heaven, earth, and hell. To its standard and its dictates, with reverence be it spoken, the heart and the hand of Jehovah Himself ever unhesitatingly respond. And wherever in His wide universe a self-conscious being exists, wherever *conscience* lives, *therein* dwells this law as a sovereign ruling force speaking in her voice, producing and sympathizing with her smile, giving darkness and terror to her frown, and imparting anguish to her sharpened sting. And this Divine law is coexistent with the Divine Being, and therefore has neither beginning nor ending. There is no moment in the unmeasured past, there can be no moment in the immeasurable future when this grand law of the moral universe *has* not rested, or does not rest its whole pressure upon every existing spiritual being. There is no moment in the eternal world when it acts not upon the awakened moral sense, when it speaks not to the conscience of the good and the evil, no moment when it produces not a renewal and continuance of joy or anguish; and upon all the finally gathered spirits of heaven and of hell it will forever look down with its calm, fixed, majestic gaze, over all forever assert an unquestioned supremacy. As a broad belt of light overgirdling the arched firmament of the celestial abodes, it will beam a perpetual joy into every adoring and perfected soul, while as a keen and vivid flame it will unquenchably burn and consume the noble energies and affections of every remorseful, sin-ruined spirit. *B.*

Of that Divine, eternal law, Hooker has beautifully said, that "her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things

in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power, though each in different form and manner, yet all with uniform consent admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy." The Divine law is not subject to the mutations of time. Co-existent with the Deity who is its great administrator, its broad sweep is from eternity, into eternity, through eternity. The same yesterday, to day, and forever, it brings up the crime of a century's growth as if it were but a moment old. Its action, like the being of God, is an eternal now; and upon the guilty it has its eye, ever with the same fixed gaze. He may hurry away into forgetfulness of himself and all around him, but the eye is there still. He may rush heedless into eternity, but the same eye meets him in the world of spirits, lighted up with new fires, which wake the memories of his old guilt from their long oblivion, and stir up the remorseful consciousness of present alienation from good. Here is the chief extent of the Divine law, that its obligations and its penalties are both eternal. Sometimes in this life it will begin the work of retribution, and kindle the flames of conscience with all the terrors of a present and living hell; but its grand sphere is in eternity, where the spirit is left bare to its searching gaze, to the recollection of past and the consciousness of present guilt, compelled to hear the constant mandate to do right, yet as often of its own free, evil nature drawing back to do wrong, and withering under that same eye which blazes on forever, and ever, and ever. This is the awful power of law when for the last time it seals up the book of account, and all its kind efforts to retrieve the criminal have proved unavailing, and obstinately and wilfully he enters the prison door, and invites the aveng-

ing stroke. O Lord, how long? may be his distressing interrogatory when ages on ages have rolled over his imprisoned spirit, till his own history looks like an eternal past. O Lord, how long? but the answer that comes from the judgment-seat, proclaims that the arm of the law is as broad as infinite duration, and its punishment must be as deathless as conscience and the soul.

It becomes us to tremble at such a law as this. Our own consciences and the Word of God proclaim that the Divine law is such, and that we are the subjects of it. It is a law that pervades the universe, and it fixes its eye and stretches out its arm over you and over me. It is a law that is all-penetrating, and it treasures up our secret as well as our outbreathing sins; it sits by our side in the sanctuary, and it follows us home to the fireside and the closet, and whether we sin with the hand or the tongue or the mind, it notes all down alike. It is a law that is eternal—in old age it binds us as it did in youth—in the grave corruption cannot stay its power—never, never, never shall we cease to hear its thrilling tones. It is a law whose worm, I speak the language of inspiration, whose worm if it be once let in upon the soul can never die, whose flame if it be once kindled, burns on and on, forever. Oh! from a law like this, so personal, so searching, so lasting, so terrible, which way shall we flee? Within is the despair of conscious guilt. Around, which way soever we turn, is that keen eye and that iron sceptre and that blazing scroll. But above them all, blessed be God for that sight, above them all is the cross of Christ, and on its front we trace in living characters—"Not to destroy, but to fulfil"—"Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth,"

Homer.

PSALM CXIX., 97-112.

VERSES 97-112.

D MEM.

- 97 OH how love I thy law !
It is my meditation all the day.
- 98 Thy commandments make me wiser than
mine enemies ;
For they are ever with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my
teachers ;
For thy testimonies are my meditation.
- 100 I understand more than the aged,
Because I have kept thy precepts.
- 101 I have refrained my feet from every evil
way,
That I might observe thy word.
- 102 I have not turned aside from thy judgments ;
For thou hast taught me.
- 103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste !
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth !
- 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding :
Therefore I hate every false way.

J NUN.

- 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
And light unto my path.
- 106 I have sworn, and have confirmed it,
That I will observe thy righteous judgments.
- 107 I am afflicted very much :
Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.
- 108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me thy judgments.
- 109 My soul is continually in my hand ;
Yet do I not forget thy law.
- 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me ;
Yet went I not astray from thy precepts.
- 111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ;
For they are the rejoicing of my heart.
- 112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes,
For ever, even unto the end.

97-104. In every one of these eight verses the Bible is spoken of as the Lord's, as, indeed, all through the Psalm. It was not fit that any should write of God but God Himself. So God wrote of Himself ; by histories, laws, prophecies, and promises, and many other doctrines hath He set Himself forth to be the Creator, Preserver, Deliverer, and Glorifier of mankind ; and all this is done in a perfect manner. *Manton.*

97. *How I love Thy law ! All the day it (is) my meditation, i.e.,* the subject of my solitary musing. This continual representation of God's law, not as a mere rule, but as an object of affection and a subject of perpetual reflection, is characteristic of the Psalms, and appears at the very threshold of the whole collection. A.

He speaketh not of his knowing, reading, hearing, speaking, or outward practising of the law, but of *love* to the law ; this is more than all the former ; all the former may be without this, but this cannot be without the former. We may know, read, hear, speak, yea, preach the law and all God's Word, as also outwardly perform outward works prescribed and commanded by the law, and yet not love it ; but

where this love is there cannot but be all the former. *T. Stoughton.*

The one feature prominent in this Psalm appears in its strength here, *the love of God's law*, a love at once sincere, deep, strong, quenchless, effective upon the activities of the mind since it prompts to continual study of the law ; effective also upon his purposes of life, since it controls his life absolutely and universally. If we are asked to give a reasonable account for such love of God's law, we need only say, it deserves to be loved for its perfect purity and for its infinite rectitude and fitness ; it justly claims this honor as coming from our beneficent Father ; it rightly commands our heart's love and appreciation as God's own means of restoring human souls to His perfect moral image. What higher reasons for loving any law can be even conceived ? Ask one who is humbly conscious of such love for God's law and of such longing for personal holiness in conformity with its spirit, and he will testify that no aspirations seem to him so reasonable ; that none other can be so blessed to himself ; that nothing else so perfectly commends itself to his convictions. He only wishes this love were stronger and its fruits in

his heart and life more abiding and more absolutely controlling. C.

The finishing stroke to the character of a good man is a heart inspired with a love to the law of God after the "inner man." Considered as a transcript of the Divine perfections, as an expression of God's immaculate holiness, as the instrument of his sanctification, it is the object of his devoted attachment. The dispositions which it enforces are wrought into his heart; the inward bias of his mind is directed toward the holiness which it prescribes. Hence those passionate expressions of attachment to the holy precepts of God which abound in the writings of David, and particularly in the one hundredth and nineteenth Psalm. "Oh, how love I Thy law!" "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times." "I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate on Thy statutes." R. Hall.

My meditation all the day. This is one of many passages which show the thoughtful character of religious men under the old dispensation. The religions of the heathen were almost entirely an external service, with no obvious groundwork of doctrine or food for thought; but the religion of the Jews, with all its complex ceremonial, had a basis of thought which supplied pious minds, trained within its pale, with the materials for lifelong reflection. The pious Jew was not only religious, in so far as he saw the agency of God everywhere in the world, but he was meditative also, in so far as the constant object of his thinking was God in the works of His hand, in the history of His people, and in the law which proceeded from His mouth. His habit of meditation was encouraged and increased, we may believe, as from age to age the writings of inspired men increased the stock of religious thoughts; but from the first there seems to have been a tendency to thoughtfulness in the Jewish character, going hand in hand with conceptions of the character of God, which called for profound reflection. Woolsey.

The special want of our time is to make the Bible more human without making it less Divine. Christ and the great truths of His Gospel must always stand in the centre and pervade the whole; but we should seek to make them do it, as the Bible itself does, touching man's nature and his history in every varied way. There is no Christian, however humble, who may not grow into the habit of such a study of

the Bible, and thus make it to himself not only a divinely true, but an ever new book; life in its heart, manifold light in all its modes of presentation, till he can enter into the spirit of this speaker, "Oh, how love I Thy law; it is my study all the day!" And all the discoveries of the Bible will have this to commend them, that they speak to us in the language of personal friendship and love. They come laden with messages from the heart of the great God, and as His truths are new, His compassions which are in them "are new also every morning." Ker.

Love of the law fastens the soul to the beloved object. "It is my meditation all the day." This habit of love and holy meditation will spread its influence over our whole character. It will fill our hearts with heavenly matter for prayer, diffuse a sweet savor over our earthly employments, sanctify the common bounties of Providence, realize the presence of God throughout the day, command prosperity upon our lawful undertakings, and enlarge our usefulness in the Church. C. B.

A man never discerns the scope, the beauty of the truths delivered till he comes to meditate on them, and to go over them again and again in his own thoughts. Manton.—What the Bible brings to you will depend in large measure upon what you bring to it. You may have a crumb, or a loaf, or a granary full to bursting, just as you choose. There is gold on its surface, there are jewels in its mines, there are royal pearls in its depths. All are not equally equipped for its study; but every one of us can do his utmost in its patient, loving study, and no labors will bring a surer or a richer reward. Behrends.

98-100. The poet sets forth the philosophy of life, which the Word of God, so sweet to him for this very reason, supplies him with. God's precious law, with which he busies himself unceasingly, makes him superior in wisdom, intelligence, and judgment, to his enemies, his teachers, and the aged. D.—Three sorts of men he mentioneth: "enemies," "teachers," "ancients;" the enemies excel in policy, teachers in doctrine, and ancients in counsel; and yet by the Word was David made wiser than all these. S.

98. They who have been taught of God, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have an experimental perception of the truth, which renders them proof against all the sophistry of infidels. I am persuaded we have many plain people here, who, if a wise man of the world was to suggest that the Bible is a human invention, would be quite at a loss how to answer him

by arguments drawn from external evidences ; yet they have found such effects from this blessed Book that they would be no more moved by the insinuation than if they were told that a cunning man, or set of men, invented the sun, and placed it in the firmament. *Newton.*

They are ever with me. A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.

99. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers*, for we come to understand our hearts, which they cannot.

100. The Word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written Word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients of the Church ; and the sacred writings kept and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings. H. — *I understand . . . because I keep.* Would we know the Lord ? let us keep His commandments. "By Thy precepts"—that is, by the observance of Thy precepts, "I get understanding." "If any man do My will, he shall know My doctrine." *N. Hardy.*

It is love, humility, reverence, purity of heart that brings an individual or an age nearer to that which is most Divine, most central in the Divine thought. Here is the real progress through which we make a real approach unto Deity ; this is the only progress that makes us better able to understand God when He speaks to us, whether it be in nature, in history, or in the Word. "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts." Are we more holy, more loving, more unselfish, more obedient, more believing, than men of the olden time ; then, and just in that proportion of our higher holiness, and our more loving obedience, and our purer, self-renouncing faith, may we hope that we are wiser in the Divine ideas. *T. Lewis.*

101. He is wiser than his enemies, his teachers, and the aged ; and his wisdom leads him to refrain from all evil. P.

102. Thou hast taught me. Divine truths lie thus far equally open to all, that though none can learn them unless they are taught of God, yet all who are sensible of their own weakness may expect His teaching, if they humbly seek it by prayer. There is none who teacheth like God. He can give not only light,

but sight ; not only lessons, but the capacity necessary for their reception. And while His mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon Him for instruction, He reveals them unto babes. *Newton.*

Have not turned aside. The teaching from above gives not only the light, but the principle to improve it. It not only points the lesson and makes it plain, but imparts the disposition to learn and the grace to obey. And His teaching will abide with you. It will win you by light and by love, and by a conquering power allure your heart with that delight in His judgments and fear of offending against them that shall prove an effectual safeguard in the hour of temptation. C. B.

103, 104. Such deep and yearning love for God's law makes even its words sweet. Precious associations cluster about them ; they are music to the ear ; honey to the tongue ; beauty on the page. They give the best of understanding, viz., that which makes us hate and shun every false way. C.

103. Not of pardon, merely, is the believer in Christ assured, but of the love of God, a love full of solicitude and tender care. He knows that he is loved, and that it is God who loves him. And it is love that raises him to true liberty and to true obedience. He is no longer under the law ; yet he is, and is more than ever, under the law. He is no longer under the external law ; he is more than ever under the internal law. This law he reveres. He rejoices to bear its yoke ; he loves it as he loves grace. The Gospel is in his eye law and grace combined. In the law and in grace united, he sees the complete expression of the will of God, the complete manifestation of His glory. He does not separate the one from the other, he does not prefer the one to the other, for in each he finds the other, grace in the law and the law in grace, and in each he sees God entire. For him the law is not merely *perfect* ; it is *delightful* ; he finds it *sweeter than honey and the honeycomb*. Be assured of this : at the end, if not at the beginning, the law must appear delightful as grace. *Vinet.*

Do we ask, What is it that gives this unutterable sweetness to the Word ? Is it not that name, which "is as ointment poured forth ?" Is it not "the savor of the knowledge in Christ," that revives the soul in every page with the breath of heaven ? Can the weary soul listen to the invitation to "all that labor and are heavy-laden," and not feel the "*sweetness*" of those breathings of love ? Who can tell the *sweetness* of those precious words to the conflict.

ing, tempted soul, displaying the Divine sovereignty in choosing him, and the unchanging faithfulness in keeping him, and the almighty power of the Divine will in the gift of eternal life? C. B.

Pause at any verse of Scripture and shake every bough of it, that some fruit may drop down. Should this mode appear somewhat difficult at first, and no thought suggest itself immediately to the mind capable of affording matter for a short ejaculation; yet persevere, and try another and another bough. If your soul really hungers, the Spirit of God will not send you away empty. You shall at length find in one, and that perhaps a short verse in Scripture, such an abundance of delicious fruit that you will gladly seat yourself under its shade and abide there, as under a tree laden with fruit. *Luther.*—We all read the Bible too fast. We do not linger over the words as if we loved them, and were loath to pass on. "Oh, how sweet are Thy words unto my throat; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth," said one of old time. Truly, the man must have delighted in the words of Holy Scripture who could so express himself! *Burton.*

In the old time the Psalmist could say, "Oh, how love I Thy law!" "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste!" "Thy testimonies are wonderful!" What shall the modern man say of the testimonies, the statutes, the judgments, the law of the Lord, as they are spread out before him? If of old a young man might cleanse his way by heeding them, how much more now. If the Book as David and Daniel had it gave food for meditation, day and night, and delighted the soul, how much more our Scriptures in their fulness! *Haydn.*

104. *Through Thy precepts I get understanding.* God's direction is our instruction. Obedience to the Divine will begets wisdom of mind and action. We are wise if we obey, and we grow wiser by obeying. *S.*—*I hate every false way.* When *through the precepts the believer gets understanding*, he learns to walk more uniformly and steadily, *abiding in the light.* In this spirit and atmosphere springs up a constant and irreconcilable "*hatred of every false way*" as contrary to the God he loves. C. B.—Those who hate sin as sin, will hate all sin, hate *every false way*, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the Word of God, the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; for *to depart from evil, that is understanding*, and the more ready we are in the Scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation. H.

105. The two parts of this verse are not two different ways of saying the same thing. The Word of God is a lamp or lantern to the feet at night; it is a light like that of the sun by day. It makes provision in this way for the whole of life. It is the secret of life's true sunshine; it is the guide when all around is dark. H. P. L.—It is not meant to shine upon miles of road, but in the darkest night it will always show us the one next step; then when we have taken that, carrying the lamp forward, it will show us another step, and thus on till it brings us out into the full, clear sunlight of coming day. It is a lamp, and it is designed to lighten only little steps, one by one. J. R. M.

What we all want is not to see wonders that daze us, and to be rapt in ecstatic visions and splendors, but a little light on the dark and troubled path we have to tread, a lamp that will burn steadfastly and helpfully over the work we have to do. The stars are infinitely more sublime, meteors infinitely more superb and dazzling; but the lamp shining in a dark place is infinitely closer to our practical needs. *Expositor.*—He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp of night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness. Ignorance upon practical subjects breeds indecision and suspense, and these are uncomfortable; the Word of God by imparting heavenly knowledge leads to decision, and when followed by determined resolution brings with it great restfulness of heart. S.

The use of a *lamp* is by night, while the *light* of the sun shineth by day. Whether it be day or night with us, we clearly understand our duty by the Word of God. The *night* signifieth adversity, and the *day* prosperity. Hence we may learn how to behave ourselves in all conditions. The word "*path*" noteth our general choice and course of life; the word "*feet*" our particular actions. Now whether the matter wherein we would be informed concerneth our choice of the way that leadeth to true happiness, or our dexterous prosecution of the way, still the Word of God will direct a humble and well-disposed mind. *Manton.*—A loving, humble heart that comes to God in His Word for light God will never suffer to go seriously astray. And indeed a loving, humble heart not only has the light of God's Word to go by, but possesses also the Interpreter of God's Word, dwelling in the soul, even the "Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him," but who will guard the soul from error, and lead it into all truth. *Cheever.*

The Bible is distinguished by a Divine exhaustlessness, a miraculous reproductiveness of meaning, life, and power. It is sometimes called a lamp. When a man first takes it for his guide, its light is very feeble. Perhaps he is not well acquainted with it. However, with its help he gets forward a few steps, and it begins to brighten up. He advances more securely, and it shines more clearly, till, no longer groping and stooping and putting forward a timorous foot, he stands erect and walks at liberty. And if the night grows darker, still the lamp burns brighter, and so step by step, and stage by stage, till at last the night is well-nigh past, but like a morning within the morning, the lamp is still clearer than the dawn, till he lays it down, for he has got where the Sun is shining. The path which it creates is brighter and brighter unto perfect day. *Hamilton.*

It is a pure light, a clear light, a steady light, an unfailing light. It burns with a lustre that never grows feeble, and casts a radiance from which nothing is hid. Think of its sufficiency. It is not only a light to lighten the eyes, not only a lamp to throw its lustre over our path; it is also a light to the feet, discovering to us all even the minutest features of the path we have to tread—all its roughnesses, all its breaks and hollows, all on it that would impede our progress or cause us to stumble if unobserved, but which observed we can avoid. And what a marvellous vitality there is in this light! Other lights have flashed and faded; other guides have offered themselves and been followed, and the blind has led the blind into the ditch, and both have perished. But this light abides as clear, and bright, and beneficent as ever. *W. L. A.*

I can truly affirm of myself that my studies have been profitable and availing to me only so far as I have endeavored to use all my other knowledge as a glass, enabling me to receive more light, in a wider field of vision, from the Word of God. *Coleridge.*

106. The sense of the vows of God which are upon you will strengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may encourage your humble boldness and freedom in applying to Him under the character and relation of your covenant God and Father, as exigencies may require. *Doddridge.*

107. The Psalmist was a consecrated man, and yet a chastened man; nor were his chastisements light. This he pleads before the Lord. He speaks not by way of murmuring, but by way of pleading; from the very much affliction he argues for very much quickening.

S.—There is a “need be” for the afflictions of the Lord’s people. The stones of the spiritual temple cannot be polished or fitted to their place without the strokes of the hammer. The gold cannot be purified without the furnace. The vine must be pruned for greater fruitfulness. The measure of discipline varies indefinitely. But *very much affliction* may often be needful. Yet will it be tempered by one whose fatherly pity will chasten “not for His pleasure, but for our profit.” And nothing will bear looking back to with comfort like those trials, which though painful to the flesh have tended to break our spirit, mould our will, and strengthen the simplicity of our walk with God. *C. B.*

108. *Accept, I beseech Thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord.* The living praise the living God, and therefore the quickened one presents his sacrifice. He offers prayer, praise, confession, and testimony—these, presented with his voice were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. S.—*Teach me Thy judgments.* We cannot offer anything to God which He will accept, but what He instructs us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favor of God toward us. *H.*

109. *My soul is in my hand always, and (yet) Thy law I have not forgotten.* The sense of the strong figure in the first clause is clear from Jud. 12:13; 1 Sam. 19:5; 28:21, where he who risks or jeopard his own life, in war or otherwise, is said to put his soul into his hand, as if to have it ready to give up or throw away at any moment. The same expression reappears in Job 13:14. The meaning of the whole verse is, that even amid the deadly perils which environed him, he still remembered the Divine law as an object of supreme affection. *A.*

111. God’s law is an everlasting possession, more truly so than the land of Canaan itself, which was given to Israel for an everlasting heritage. P.—Men highly prize and carefully keep their charters, privileges, conveyances, and assurances of their lands; and shall not the saints much more highly prize, and carefully keep in the closet of their hearts, the precious Word of God, which is to them instead of all assurances for their maintenance, deliverance, protection, confirmation, consolation, and eternal salvation? *T. Brooks.*—Bible history is valuable because in it we are distinctly pointed to God’s movement; because we are there shown a history developing along lines of providence. . . . And in the growth of these long, weary centuries, what a rich variety of

testimonies God has accumulated. How many laws of *conduct*, for instance, have taken shape in the various situations in which the men of the Bible history have been placed ; how many shining examples of distinct virtues : patience in Job, faith in Abraham, fidelity in Moses, brave hopefulness in Caleb, zeal in Elijah, affectionateness in John, earnestness in Peter ; what wonderful varieties of character, illustrated in Samson, Samuel, Elisha, Balaam, Isaiah, Paul ; what a variety of methods of teaching ; the direct communications of God to Abraham and Jacob, the symbolic lessons of the Levitical code, the burning utterances of prophecy, the inspired melody of the Psalms, the Gospel, the Epistle, the Apocalypse. And the Bible gives unity to this whole mass of testimony, ranges it all round the one thought of God, makes all its variety tell of God's teaching, God's power, God's purpose, God's love, God's hatred of sin. Thus it is summed up in the introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews : " God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Abraham and Christ, though separated by such long time, though speaking in such diverse manners, yet speak one voice, and are parts of one heritage of testimony. V.

The rejoicing of my heart. The child of God looks round on the universe, on both worlds, on God Himself with His infinite perfections, and says, " All things are Mine." My title is more sure than to any earthly *heritage*. Every promise is sprinkled with " the blood of the everlasting covenant," as the seal of its blessings and the pledge of their performance. Let the recollection of the rich heritage of light, comfort, peace, and strength, furnished in the Word, be my abundant joy, and bind my heart to a closer adherence to its obligations, and to a more habitual apprehension of its privileges. C. B.

There is a joy in the Word of God ; not merely because it is full of interesting narrative, charming biography, marvellous prophecy, grand argument of doctrine, grand revelation of the future ; not merely for all that makes the Bible interesting and attractive to the common and secular mind, and will continue to make it so in all races and countries to the end of time ; but the more because, here, God meets the human spirit which has been seeking Him, and has found it in order to lift it nearer Himself—to give it His own secret thought, if we may say so. As a friend touches our mind most, not merely in the book he writes, but in the

letter addressed to us personally, so God makes the Bible a letter to the race, and to every soul within the race, in which His thought is communicated to it. As He does that—and we feel He does that—as we, meditating upon the law, see His righteousness ; upon the death of Christ, see the glory of His self-sacrifice ; meditating upon the discoveries of the future here made to us, see His plan for the world, and His plan for the redeemed soul in heaven—as we see all these, we feel a joy in the Word which we cannot find in any poetry, or philosophy, or eloquence, or discovery of man. The soul feels itself brought, by the Word, into fellowship with the Divine mind. It has an intense gladness of heart meditating upon the Word, whose mysteries then become to it arguments for its Divine origin, whose transcendent promises flash before it as with the effulgence of the Divine mind. R. S. S.

112. He *inclined his heart to God's commandments* ; took and *bent his heart*, as a thing bending too much to other things ; set his mind musing on it. If he had not brought his heart to the Word, he had never meditated ; the object cannot apply itself to the mind, but the mind must bring itself to the object. No holy duties will come to us, we must come to them. *N. Ranew.*—The believer is so charmed and won by the manifold adaptations of the Divine truth to his needs, so touched and penetrated by it, that he receives it into his inner life, and suffers it to become part of his very being ; he prepares, so to speak, a sanctuary for it in the inmost recesses of his spirit, from which, like the *Shekinah* in the temple, it sheds a hallowing and enlightening influence through all the courts of his soul. Not only does he understand the Word, not only give it the sanction of his intelligence, and will, and affection, but he suffers it to become the guiding and shaping spirit of his life ; inasmuch, that he acts out its dictates as by instinct, has no need elaborately and distrustfully to argue them out, but at once recognizes them as both his law and his choice. *Cox.*—I love my Bible in its commands as well as in its promises. I do not need it merely to tell me that sin may be pardoned, but I want it to tell me how my conduct should be regulated. *R. Hill.*

In the days of King David, the Bible was a scanty book ; yet he loved it well, and found daily wonders in it. Genesis, with its sublime narration of how God made the worlds, with its glimpses of patriarchal piety, and dark dis-

closures of gigantic sin ; Exodus, with its glorious marchings through that great wilderness, its thrilling memorials of Jehovah's outstretched arm, and the volume of the written law ; Leviticus, through whose flickering vistas David's eye discovered the shadows of better things to come ; Numbers, with its natural history of the heart of man ; and Deuteronomy, with its vindication of the ways of God ; Joshua and Judges, with their chapters of providence, their stirring incidents and peaceful episodes ; the memoirs of Job, so fraught with spiritual experience ; and the domestic annals of Ruth, which told to her grandson such a tale of Divine foreknowledge, and love, and care, all converging on himself, or rather on David's Son and David's Lord. These were David's Bible, and so thankful was he for such a priceless possession, that he praised God for its righteous judgments seven times a day. But you have got an ampler Bible—a Bible with Psalms and prophets in it—a Bible with Gospels and epistles. How do you love that law ? How often have you found yourself clasping it to your bosom as the man of your counsel ? How often have your eyes glistened over a brightening page as one who had found great spoil ? How often have you dwelt on its precious promises, till they evolved a sweetness which made you marvel ? How many times have you praised the Lord for the clearness of its light, the sanctity of its truth, and the sureness of its immortality ? *Hamilton.*

If you will but open the Word of God's truth and listen to the songs that break out there, under God's statutes ; if you will behold the good of past ages bending over God's law, as the spring of their sweetest enjoyments, crying each, Oh, how love I Thy law ; if you will observe, too, what enlargement and freedom of soul they find in their obedience, and how they look upon the mere natural life of the flesh as bondage in comparison ; if you will see how they disarm all their trials and dangers by this same obedience ; how they come away to God from the scorching sands of their pilgrimage, as to the shadow of a great rock, and refresh their fainting spirits by singing the statutes of the Lord ; if you will see what a character of courage, and patience, and self-sacrifice they receive ; how all great sentiments, such as carry their own dignity and blessing with them, spring up in the rugged trials of duty and obedience to God ; then, last of all, if you will dare to break over the confines of mortality ascending to look on, as spectator, in that world of the glorified, where the law of God makes

full illustration of its import in the high experiences it nourishes and the benign society it organizes, you will by that time get, I am sure, an impression of the bliss, and greatness, and glory of obligation to God, such as will profoundly instruct you. What seems to you now to be a most unwelcome constraint, or even an annoyance to your peace, you will thus find reason, after all, to believe is only the best and dearest privilege vouchsafed you. *Bushnell.*

Recall constantly to your minds these three simple truths which form the essence of Christianity : *The Word of God ONLY ; the grace of Christ ONLY ; the work of the Spirit ONLY ;* and they will be truly a lamp to your feet, and a light to all your paths. These are the three great watch-lights which the Holy Spirit has raised in the Church ; their light ought to spread from one end of the world to the other. While these shine, the Church walks in the light ; as soon as these three lights are extinguished, or only obscured, darkness, like that of Egypt, is spread upon Christianity. *D'Aubigne.*

The Bible is already wrought into all the dominant forces of the civilization of the West. Christianity has wrought such revolutions of opinion ; it has thrown into the world so much of original thought ; it has organized so many institutions, customs, unwritten laws of life ; it has leavened society with such a powerful antiseptic to the putrescent elements of depravity ; and it has therefore positively created so much of the best material of humanity, that now the noblest type of civilization cannot be conceived of otherwise than as a debtor to the Christian Scriptures. The Bible discloses the only groundwork and process of a perfect civilization as a practicable result. The idea out of which the future civilization must grow is here, there, everywhere, in the Book of life. That idea is the moral regeneration of the individual. Christianity exalts spiritual over material forces. It intensifies individual being. Its whole process is a process of symmetrical elevation. It works a power which is diffusive. It is affluent in the production of certain auxiliary ideas. These, like itself, are spiritual ; and they take on social, and civil, and political forms. While throwing out these ideas, the Bible does exhibit a certain Divine consciousness that they must and will, and a purpose that they shall, become constructive elements in society. This is exhibited, *e.g.*, in that most luminous fact in scriptural history that God educates nations as the representatives of principles. Starting thus with the idea of the moral

regeneration of the individual, the Word of God conducts us, by easy and inevitable stages, to that truth which becomes its own witness to a Christian believer, that the civilization of the future and the triumph of Christianity are identical. *A. Phelps.*

PSALM CXIX., 113-128.

VERSES 113-128.

וּ שְׁמֵעַח.

113 I HATE them that are of a double mind ;
But thy law do I love.
114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield :
I hope in thy word.
115 Depart from me, ye evil-doers ;
That I may keep the commandments of my
God.
116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that
I may live ;
And let me not be ashamed of my hope.
117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe,
And shall have respect unto thy statutes
continually.
118 Thou hast set at nought all them that err
from thy statutes ;
For their deceit is falsehood.
119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the
earth like dross :
Therefore I love thy testimonies.

113. Of double mind. See the noun from the same root (1 Kings 18 : 21), "How long halt ye between two opinions?" and compare James 1 : 8. P.

Thy law do I love. God's law is the highest revelation of His character, which is made prior to the coming of Christ into the world ; the law which is holy and just and good ; the law which extends not merely to the particulars of human action, but to the intimate secrets of human character, to the depths of the spiritual life in the soul ; a law which required love from man toward God as the root and motive power in all his conduct and in all his moral life. That law conserves the interests of the universe. That law is a great educating power in the spiritual creation. That law makes heaven possible, as it would not otherwise be. That law illustrates the Divine

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee ;
And I am afraid of thy judgments.

וְ אֵינִי.

121 I have done judgment and justice :
Leave me not to mine oppressors.
122 Be surety for thy servant for good :
Let not the proud oppress me.
123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,
And for thy righteous word.
124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy
mercy,
And teach me thy statutes.
125 I am thy servant, give me understanding ;
That I may know thy testimonies.
126 It is time for the LORD to work ;
For they have made void thy law.
127 Therefore I love thy commandments
Above gold, yea, above fine gold.
128 Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts concern-
ing all *things* to be right ;
And I hate every false way.

righteousness and the Divine wisdom, as stars do not, or tossing seas, or all the gorgeous flower tribes of the earth. When the Bible says there is a Divine law and this is it—love toward God and man and all the spiritual creation of God—it represents the highest fact in the Divine economy of the universe until we come to the cross of Christ. And no man who values law in society, who knows himself and his neighbor to be safer on account of its presence, who desires and demands it as a power for educating men in righteousness, should quarrel with the revelation which the Bible makes of a Divine law and of a Divine Law-giver in the heavens. R. S. S.

114. The completeness of our security is graphically portrayed, *Thou art my hiding-place*, to cover from danger, *my shield*, to protect me in it. Either I shall be kept from

trouble that it shall not come ; or *in* trouble that it shall not hurt me. Surely, then, *the Word*, which has discovered this security to us, is a firm warrant for our "*hope*." And therefore every believer will be ready to declare, "*I hope in Thy Word*." C. B.—God's people are safe under God's protection. He is their *strength and their shield* ; their *help and their shield* ; their *sun and their shield* ; their *shield and their great reward* ; and here their *hiding-place and their shield*. They may by faith retire to Him, and repose in Him as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose His power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart. H.

I hope in Thy Word. Of all the ingredients that sweeten the cup of human life, there is none more rich or powerful than *hope*. Its absence embitters the sweetest lot ; its presence alleviates the deepest woe. Surround me with all the joys which memory can awaken or possession bestow—without hope it is not enough. But if the morrow shineth bright with hope, I am glad amid my woe. Of all the busy motives that stir this teeming earth, hope is the busiest. It is the sweetest balm that soothes our sorrows, the brightest beam that gilds our pleasures. Hope is the noblest offspring, the first born, the last buried child of foreseeing and forecasting man. Without it reflecting man should not, cannot be truly happy. W. Grant.

115. *Depart from me, ye evil-doers.* Woe be to the wicked man, and woe to those who adhere to him and associate with him, saith *Ben Sira*. Even the pagans of old thought that a curse went along with those who kept evil company. To inhabit or to travel with an impious man, and one not beloved of the gods, was held by them to be unlucky and unfortunate. How much more, then, ought Christians to be thoroughly persuaded of the mischief and danger of conversing with wicked men ! J. Edwards.

That I may keep the commandments of my God. Bravely resolved ! like a saint, like a soldier ; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God, and may command me ; my God, and will command me nothing but what is for my good. H.—The word *God* only occurs in this one place in all this lengthened Psalm,

and then it is attended by the personal word "my"—"my God," S.

116. My plea is the Word of promise : "*According to Thy Word* ;" "*As thy days, so shall thy strength be*." "*Fear thou not*," is the language of my upholding God, "*for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee* with the right hand of My righteousness." Blessed be the goodness that made the promise, and that guides the hand of my faith to fasten upon it ! C. B.

116, 117. He prays for sustaining grace ; for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice ; *uphold me*, and again, *hold Thou me up*. He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin unless he was prevented by Divine grace ; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity, to keep him from falling, and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil doing nor be weary of well doing. We stand no longer than God holds us, and go no farther than He carries us. H.

117. *Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.* Not only the consciousness of my weakness, but the danger of the slippery path before me, reminds me that the safety of every moment depends upon the upholding power of my faithful God. The ways of temptation are so many and imperceptible, the influence of it so appalling, the entrance into it so deceitful, so specious, so insensible, and my own weakness and unwatchfulness are so unspeakable, that I can do nothing but go on my way, praying at every step, "*Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe*." C. B.—God alone gives perseverance. Can any one who knows his own weakness, and considers all the seducements and temptations of life, trust at all to himself ? We are so much the less secure of receiving this gift, the more confident we are of it ; and we have so much the more reason to hope for it, the more unworthy we think ourselves thereof. It belongs to Him who has begun the work of salvation to finish and complete it in us. But in order to this, it belongs to us to fear, to pray, to humble ourselves, and to labor. *Quesnel*.

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Every agent in society, and every element in nature, may be charged with a blessing or a curse ; and whether the one or the other should light upon us, can best be left to the determination of Him who knows both what we are and what we should be made. This arrangement is infinitely best for ourselves.

The task of first forming a human soul for glory, and then bringing that soul to its possession, is what none but God Himself could accomplish. Good men themselves also have felt the difficulty in reference to their own case; and the best of them have discovered their wisdom in proportion to the confidence they have reposed on the Captain of their salvation. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." *R. Hall.*

118. If *the wicked* seem to triumph, it shall not be always so. "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." How awful, then, their condition! "*Their deceit is falsehood;*" "deceiving and being deceived"—perhaps given up to believe their own lie—perhaps one or another "blessing themselves in their own heart," saying, "'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.'" C. B.

119. There can be no government without a law. Every law has its sanctions—the hopes of proffered reward on the one hand, the fears of threatened vengeance on the other. Is the vengeance to be threatened only, but never to be executed? Take away from jurisprudence its penalties, or, what were still worse, let the penalties only be denounced but never exacted, and we reduce the whole to an unsubstantial mockery. The fabric of moral government falls to pieces; and, instead of a great presiding authority in the universe, we have a subverted throne and a degraded sovereign. If the judge is thus to be lost in the overweening parent, there is nothing of a moral government over us but the name, we are not the subjects of God's authority; we are the fondlings of His regard. Under a system like this, the whole universe would drift into a state of anarchy; and, in the uproar of this wild misrule, the King who sitteth on high would lose His hold on the creation that He had formed. *Chalmers.*

121, 122. He pleads not merit. He only asserts his innocence, the righteousness of his cause, not of his person. Though upright before man, he ever felt himself a sinner before God. The highest tone of conscious integrity is therefore consistent with the deepest prostration of evangelical humility. The Pharisee makes the appeal with undisturbed self-complacency and self-righteous pleading. The believer would ever accompany it with the publican's prayer for mercy. Instantly, in a deep conviction of need, he appends the supplication, "*Be surety for Thy servant for good.*" C. B. —It is the prayer of Hezekiah in his trouble,

"O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me" (Isa. 38:14); it is the prayer of Job for a "daysman" to stand between him and God (Job 9:33); it is the confidence of every faithful soul in the perpetual intercession of our great High-Priest in heaven, which is to us the pledge of future blessedness. *Anon.*—The Son of God Himself became "Surety for a stranger," and "smarted for it" (Prov. 11:15). At an infinite cost, the cost of His own precious blood, He delivered me from "*mine oppressors*"—sin, Satan, the world, death, hell.

123. Wonderful is that arrangement by which the Word of grace is made *the Word of righteousness!* God hath bound Himself to us by His promises of grace, which are not yea and nay, but "yea and amen," under His own hand and seal. Cheering indeed is the thought that, amid the incessant changes in Christian experience, our hope is unchangeably fixed. We may not indeed always enjoy it; but our salvation does not depend upon our present enjoyment of its consolation.

124, 125. As a "*servant of God,*" I can only come before Him upon the ground of "*mercy.*" For my best performances I need an immeasurable world of mercy, pardoning, saving, everlasting mercy; and yet by the blood of Jesus I dare to plead, "*Deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy.*" But I am ignorant as well as guilty; and yet I dare not pray for *teaching*, much and hourly as I need it, until I have afresh obtained mercy. These two blessings lead me at once to the foundations of the Gospel, in the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit, *mercy* flowing from the blood of the Son, *teaching* from the office of the Spirit. I must know the Lord as a Saviour before I can go to Him with any confidence to be my teacher. But when once I have found acceptance for my petition, "*Deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy,*" my way will be opened to enlarge my petition; yea, once and again to repeat it, "*Teach me Thy statutes. Give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies.*" C. B.

126. Made void Thy law. This is not done by the indulgence of sin in action or thought, but in the heart. It is by the understanding and the conscience that the Divine law is to be apprehended in its amplitude. Now, nothing is more notorious than the baneful effect which indulged and practised sin has on both these. It inflicts a grossness on the understanding which renders it totally unadapted to take cognizance of anything that is to be "spiritually discerned;" as unadapted as

our bodily senses are to perceive spirits. It throws a thick obscurity over the whole vision of the Divine law, so that nothing of it is distinctly perceived, except when sometimes some part of it breaks out in thunder. The conscience partakes the stupefaction; is insensible to a thousand accusations and menaces of the Divine law, every one of which ought to have been pungent and painful. Again, it is to be observed, that the general operation of self-love in a corrupted being is adverse to any clear and effectual acknowledgment of "the exceeding breadth" of the Divine law. The being has a certain sense of not being in a state of peace and harmony with God, but of alienation, opposition, and in a degree, hostility; but still devotedly loves itself. It has therefore a set of self-defensive feelings against Him. But since it could not defend itself against His power, it endeavors to defend itself against His law. It ventures to question the necessity or propriety of one point of His law; refuses to admit the plain interpretation of another, or to admit the clear inferences from undeniable rules. It makes large portions of the Divine laws refer to other men and times; to special and transient occasions and circumstances; is ingenious in inventing exemptions for itself; weakens the force of both the meaning and the authority of the Divine dictates, which it cannot avert from their application to itself. Thus it "renders void" much of both the spirit and the letter; and thus places itself amid a dwindled and falsified system of the Divine legislation. Add to this the influence of the customs and maxims of the world. For a moment, suppose these admitted to constitute the supreme law and standard. Let all that these adjudge superfluous be left out and rejected; all that these account indifferent be set down so; all that these warrant by practice be formally sanctioned; all that these pronounce honorable and admirable be inscribed in golden letters; all that these have settled as true wisdom be adopted as principles and oracles. Especially, let what the customs and notions of the world have mainly satisfied themselves with in respect to religion be admitted as the true scheme of our relations and duties to God. Now let this system be placed opposite to the Divine law! Would it not be like Baal's prophets confronting Elijah? like Satan propounding doctrine to our Lord? like a holy angel and a devil looking in each other's face? But, think, this is actually the system on which the notions and habits of the multitude are formed! *Foster.*

Everywhere among the children of the world

the law of God is taken at a discount. Each accepts of it whatever he finds proportioned to his powers and convenient to his circumstances; each makes a law according to his own standard. Morality changes its form and dimensions with each individual. And, what is especially worthy of notice in this connection, is that they make only those sacrifices to the law which cost them nothing, those indeed which are no sacrifices at all. But each appears to demand favor for every cherished inclination, for every reserved vice, for every idol he has not the courage to break; the avaricious man, for the mania of gain and accumulation, the sensual for the indulgences he cannot renounce, the vain for the distinctions by which he is flattered. In a word, behind conscience, and amid the deep shadows of the soul, each cherishes, perhaps unknown to himself, some idolatrous altar. *Vinet.*

"Men have made void Thy law." This might at first view seem impossible, as if it were the defeat of Omnipotence itself by the creature it has made; but there is a sphere in which even the function of Omnipotence itself becomes restrained or transformed, in order that there may exist created wills, and that there may be a kingdom in which subjects obey not because they must, but because they choose. The sphere and sweep of these laws and their action are not to be without the man, but within him. God stands related to us now chiefly through these laws. In conscience, in the Decalogue, and in the Gospel of His Son, the law of the Spirit of life—in all that expresses the Divine will—He speaks to us. They together make up that law which, in the words of our text, "men have made void." If it be inquired how men have made void the law of God, we answer: By assailing its authority; in denying the personality of its source; in palliating the gravity of its transgression; in restricting the area of its rule; by disparaging its sufficiency. *E. Mellor.*

It is time for the Lord to work.

Infidelity was never more subtle, more hurtful, more plausible, perhaps more successful than in the day in which we live. It has left the low grounds of vulgarity and coarseness and ribaldry, and intrenched itself upon the lofty heights of criticism, philology, and even science itself. It pervades to a fearful extent our popular literature; it has invested itself with the charms of poetry, to throw its spell over the public mind; it has endeavored to enweave itself with science; and it is espoused by a large portion of the cultivated mind of this

generation. *J. A. James.*—There is a wonderful boldness in this language of the Psalmist—a summons of God to the rescue of His own world. And yet such challenge is the privilege of earnest men. It is the violence which takes heaven by force. God does not resent it; He hears it; He invites it; He answers it. When God arises to work, we know not what will be the form and fashion of His operations. If the Lord begins to work, we may expect a wondrous effusion of the Holy Spirit both upon His Church and the world, which is still estranged from His law and love. With the outpouring of the Spirit the Church in reality began. In the New Testament the work of Christ has no meaning, except as it is unfolded by the Holy Spirit; it has no power, except as it is applied by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is as much the Gospel of the Holy Spirit as it is the Gospel of the Son of God. *E. Mellor.*

127. Everything betters a saint. Not only ordinances, Word, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, broken-hearted mourning. As the wicked are hurt by the best things, so the godly are bettered by the worst. Because "*they have made void Thy law, therefore do I love Thy commandments.*" Holiness is the more owned by the godly, the more the world despiseth it. The most eminent saints were those of Cæsar's (Nero's) house (Phil. 4 : 22); they who kept God's name were they who lived where Satan's throne was (Rev. 2 : 13). Zeal for God grows the hotter by opposition; and thereby the godly most labor to give the glory of God reparation. *Jenkyn.*

The Psalmist was surrounded, as would appear, by widespread defection from God's law. But instead of trembling as if the sun were about to expire, he turns himself to God, and in fellowship with Him sees in all the antagonism but the premonition that He is about to act for the vindication of His own work. Then, with another movement of thought, the contemplation of the departures makes him tighten his own hold on the law of the Lord, and the contempt of the gainsayers quicken his love: "*Therefore I love,*" etc. And, as must needs be the case, that love is the measure of his abhorrence of the opposite; and because God's commandments are so dear to him, therefore he recoils with healthy hatred from false ways. So we have a fourfold representation here of our true attitude in the face of existing antagonism—calm confidence in God's work for His law; earnest prayer, which secures the forth-

putting of the Divine energy; an increased intensity of cleaving to the Word, and a decisive opposition to the ways which make it void. *A. M.*

128. It is no compromising testimony to the integrity and value of the Lord's precepts with which the Psalmist concludes, "*I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right*"—every command, however hard; every injunction, however distasteful; every precept, however severe; even cut off Thy right hand, pluck out Thy right eye; forget Thine own people and Thy father's house; take up Thy cross daily; yea, Lord, even so, "*all Thy precepts concerning all things are right.*" *Bouchier.*

I hate every false way. His high esteem of every precept raised up in him a holy indignation against every evil way. A holy man knows that all sin strikes at the holiness of God, the glory of God, the nature of God, the being of God, and the law of God; and therefore his heart rises against all. *T. Brooks.*—As there is nothing good, but in some measure a godly man loves it; so is there nothing evil, but in some measure he hates it. And this is the perfection of the children of God; a perfection not of degrees; for we neither love good nor hate evil as we should; but a perfection of parts; because we love every good, and we hate every evil in some measure. *W. Cowper.*—The Being who loves the good with infinite intensity must hate evil with the same intensity. So far from any incompatibility between this love and this hatred, they are the counterparts of each other, opposite poles of the same moral emotion. *J. W. Haley.*

Every way, however pleasing to the flesh, that is opposed to the revealed will of God, is "*hated,*" as "*false*" in itself and "*false*" to his God. This "*godly sincerity*" will apply to every part of the Christian directory. So that any plea for the indulgence of sin, or any wilful shrinking from the *universality* of obedience, blots out all pretensions to uprightness of heart. If holiness be *really loved*, it will be loved for its own sake; and *equally loved and followed in every part.* *C. B.*

If there be any truth at all, to confess it is to deny its opposite, to cleave to *this* is to reject that, to love the one is to hate the other. As broad a liberality as you please within the limits that are laid down by the very nature of the case. "*These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.*" Wheresoever that record is accepted, that Divine name confessed, that faith

exercised, and that life possessed, there, with all diversities, own a brother. Wheresoever these things are not, loyalty to your Lord demands that the strength of your love for His

Word should be manifested in the strength of your recoil from that which makes it void. "I love Thy commandments, and I hate every false way." A. M.

PSALM CXIX., 129-144.

VERSES 129-144.

5 PE.

- 129 THY testimonies are wonderful :
Therefore doth my soul keep them.
- 130 The opening of thy words giveth light ;
It giveth understanding unto the simple.
- 131 I opened wide my mouth, and panted ;
For I longed for thy commandments.
- 132 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon
me,
As thou usest to do unto those that love thy
name.
- 133 Order my footsteps in thy word ;
And let not any iniquity have dominion
over me.
- 134 Redeem me from the oppression of man :
So will I observe thy precepts.
- 135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant ;
And teach me thy statutes.
- 136 Mine eyes run down with rivers of water,
Because they observe not thy law.

Y TZADE.

- 137 Righteous art thou, O LORD,
And upright are thy judgments.
- 138 Thou hast commanded thy testimonies in
righteousness
And very faithfulness.
- 139 My zeal hath consumed me,
Because mine adversaries have forgotten
thy words.
- 140 Thy word is very pure [Heb. *tried*, or, *re-
fined*] ;
Therefore thy servant loveth it.
- 141 I am small and despised :
Yet do not I forget thy precepts.
- 142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting right-
eousness,
And thy law is truth.
- 143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on
me :
Yet thy commandments are my delight.
- 144 Thy testimonies are righteous for ever :
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

**129. Thy testimonies are wonder-
ful.** The Bible itself is an astonishing and
standing miracle. Written fragment by frag-
ment, through the course of fifteen centuries,
under different states of society, and in different
languages, by persons of the most opposite
tempers, talents, and conditions, learned and
unlearned, prince and peasant, bond and free ;
cast into every form of instructive composition
and good writing : history, prophecy, poetry,
allegory, emblematic representation, judicious
interpretation, literal statement, precept, ex-
ample, proverbs, disquisition, epistle, sermon,
prayer—in short, all rational shapes of human
discourse, and treating, moreover, on subjects
not obvious, but most difficult, its authors are
not found like other men, contradicting one an-
other upon the most ordinary matters of fact

and opinion, but are at harmony upon the whole
of their sublime and momentous scheme.
MacLagan.

God's testimonies are "wonderful" in their
majesty and *purity*, which strike reverence into
the hearts of those that consider ; "wonderful"
for the *matter* and *depth of mystery*, which can-
not be found elsewhere, concerning God and
Christ, the creation of the world, the souls of
men and their immortal and everlasting condi-
tion. The Decalogue in ten words compriseth
the whole duty of man, and reacheth to the very
soul and all the motions of the heart. The Scrip-
ture is "wonderful" for the *harmony* and *con-
sistent* of all the parts. All religion is of a piece,
and one part doth not interfere with another,
but conspireth to promote the great end—of sub-
jection of the creature to God. It is "wonder-

ful" for the *power* of it. 'There is a mighty power which goeth along with the Word of God, and astonisheth the hearts of those that consider it and feel it. *Manton*.—He who foreknew every thought that would find an entrance into the minds of His people, has here secretly laid up seasonable direction and encouragement for every, even the most minute, occasion and circumstance of need. Here again is wrapped up, in words fitted by wisdom to receive the revelation, all that intercourse between God and man, throughout all ages of the Church, which is treasured up in the vast, unsearchable depository of the Divine mind and purpose. Can we, then, forbear repeating the exclamation, "*Thy testimonies are wonderful?*" C. B.

What do I not owe to the Lord for permitting me to take a part in the translation of His Word? Never did I see such wonders, and wisdom, and love in the blessed Book as since I have been obliged to study every expression; and it is a delightful reflection that death cannot deprive us of the pleasure of studying its mysteries. *Henry Martyn*.—Shortly before his death, Dr. Buchanan, giving to a friend some details of his laborious revisions of his Syriac Testament, suddenly stopped and burst into tears. On recovering himself, he said: "I was completely overcome with the recollection of the delight which I had enjoyed in this exercise. At first I was disposed to shrink from the task as irksome, and apprehended that I should find even the Scriptures fail by the frequency of this critical examination. But so far from it, every fresh perusal seemed to throw fresh light on the Word of God, and to convey additional joy and consolation to my mind." C. B.

130. *The opening of Thy words enlightens, making the simple understand.* The common version of the first word (*entrance*) is inaccurate, and the one here given, though exact, is ambiguous. The clause does not refer to the mechanical opening of the Book by the reader, but to the spiritual opening of its true sense, by Divine illumination, to the mind which naturally cannot discern it. A.—Thy Word of truth thus unfolded to the mind enlightens it. The "simple" are the docile, the simple-hearted, who honestly desire to know the truth, with a heart willing and joyful to obey. C.—What is the Bible? To sight, it is "a book that may be read like any other book;" it is a vast, a beautiful, but a human literature. To faith, it is throughout inspired and unerring; it is the very voice of God speaking in human language to His listening children. H. P. L.

We will not give up reason to stand always

as a priestess at the altars of human philosophy. She hath a more majestic temple to tread, and more beauteous robes wherein to walk, and incense-rarer and more fragrant to burn in golden censers. She does well when exploring boldly God's visible works. She does better when she meekly submits to spiritual teaching, and sits, as a child, at the Saviour's feet; for then shall she experience the truth that, "the opening of God's words giveth light and understanding." *Melville*.—Even reason, which is nature, leads a man up to religion's palace, though it shows him not all the private rooms within it. It brings him into the presence, though not into the privy chamber. It ushers him to faith, which, rightly understood, is little more than ratified and pure celestial reason. For of faith there is reason to be given; and though it be set in a height beyond our human perception, it is rather super-elevated than contradictory to our reason. When man comes to faith he then runs out of himself, but not at all against himself. He but lifts up nature to a higher scale. *Feltham*.

The energies of the intellect, increase of insight, and enlarging views, are necessary to keep alive the substantial faith in the heart. They are the appointed fuel to the sacred fire. In the state of perfection all other faculties may, perhaps, be swallowed up in love; but it is on the wings of the Cherubim, which the ancient Hebrew doctors interpreted as meaning the powers and efforts of the intellect, that we must first be borne up to the "pure Empyrean;" and it must be seraphs, and not the hearts of poor mortals, that can burn unfuelled and self-fed. *Coleridge*.

It cannot be safe to separate the light of the Spirit from the light of the Word. The Word, indeed, moves in subserviency to the Spirit; but the light of the Spirit is nowhere promised separate from the Word. If it does not always guide directly by the Word, yet it is only manifested in the direction of the Word. Though the Spirit may by immediate light direct us to any path of duty, yet it is invariably to that path which had been previously marked by the light of the Word. Thus the Spirit and the Word conjointly become our guide, the Spirit enlightening and quickening the Word, and the Word evidencing the light of the Spirit. C. B.

131. *I opened my mouth.* An expression denoting eager desire, as in Job 29:23. Like one oppressed with burning heat, and longing for some cool spring of water, or some fresh breeze to fan his brow. P.

For I longed for Thy commandments. Longed

to know them, to obey them, to be conformed to their spirit, to teach them to others. He was ■ servant of God, and longed to receive orders ; he was a learner in the school of grace, and his eager spirit longed to be taught of the Lord. S.—The soul must be kept open to heavenly influence ; so that, when the Lord touches us with conviction, inclines our hearts to Himself, and constrains us to His service, we may be ready to receive, to cherish, and improve the heavenly “*longing after His commandments ;*” and may *pant* for more advanced progress in them. C. B.

The first condition of the freshness and energy of faith is constant devotion. The attrition of the world wears it thin, the distractions of life draw it from its clinging hold on Christ, the very toil for Him is apt to entice our thoughts from out of the secret place of the Most High into the busy arena of our strife. Therefore we have ever need to refresh the drooping flowers of the chaplet by bathing them in the Fountain of Life, to rise above all the fevered toil of earth to the calm heights where God dwells, and in still communion with Him to replenish our emptied vessels and fill our dimly burning lamps with His golden oil. The sister of the cumbered Martha is the contemplative Mary, who sits in silence at the Master's feet and lets His words sink into her soul ; the closest friend of Peter the apostle of action is John the apostle of love. If our work is to be worthy, it must ever be freshened anew by our gaze into His face ; if our communion with Him is to be deep, it must never be parted from outward service. Our Master has left us the example, in that, when the night fell and every man went to his own home, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives ; and thence, after His night of prayer, came very early in the morning to the temple and taught. The stream that is to flow broad and life-giving through many lands must have its hidden source high among the pure snows that cap the mount of God. The man that would work for God must live with God. A. M.

If we would but remember what the Word of God contains ; if we would but lay it to our inmost meditation, that that Book holds within its leaves the only authentic record that exists of the will and purpose of the Being with whose will and purpose we are to be concerned for all eternity, not a Sabbath, not a day, would pass from us without bearing its burden of prayer and thanksgiving to that God who has, in His special favor, given to us that commandment which is “pure, enlightening the eyes.” “The entrance of Thy words,” cries the Psalm-

ist, in a holy ecstasy, “giveth light ; it giveth understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth and *panted* ; for I longed for Thy commandments.” Oh Christians ! shall we who live after the Advent of the Redeemer, and beneath the full effluence of the Spirit, the Comforter, be outdone in fervent desires by him who, however blest, could only in prophecy look for the future and distant appearing of his Saviour ? W. A. B.

132. Have mercy upon me. Mercy is indeed secured to him beyond the powers of earth and hell to despoil him of it ; but the comfortable sense of this mercy is vouchsafed only according to the earnestness of his desires and the simplicity of his faith. And this is indeed a blessing with which no earthly source of satisfaction can compare. C. B.—While he could not be satisfied with anything less than their portion, he asks for nothing better ; he implores no singular dispensation in his favor, no deviation from the accustomed methods of his grace. Says the suppliant before us, “Secure me their everlasting portion, and I am willing to drink of the cup they drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism they were baptized with. I want no new, no by-path to glory. I am content to keep the King's high road. *‘Be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name.’* I ask no more.” W. Jay.

Love Thy name. One way or another, true love will make us evermore on the watch that the name of the Beloved which we carry about with us may in no way suffer through our neglect. Those who so love God's name see what a mighty encouragement is held out to them. They are sure of being looked on and of obtaining mercy. For it is said, “Thou usest to do so unto those that love Thy name.” God will not turn His face away from them ; He will be merciful to them when they confess their sins. He promises that nothing at all shall be lost which we do simply and truly for the love of His name. *Keble.*

If devoutness is so much rarer than it ought to be, the reason is not hard to find. For we love our God with such a feeble, meagre love, not in the least because He denies us the power of loving Him, or refuses to pour into our heart His love to us ; but partly because we do not sufficiently appreciate the duty and the blessedness of loving Him ; partly because we hinder the outcoming of His love to us, and the upgoing of our love to Him by sloth or self-indulgence ; partly also, because we do not fulfil the conditions, and use with such languor and

indifference the aids and helps by which alone love to God can burn in the soul with a steady and bright flame. If professing Christians who are continually lamenting their want of love to God would really and thoroughly search their hearts about, some of them might discover that they have already as much of God's love as they have any right to expect; and that the sense of His love to them, or theirs to Him, is in exact proportion to their real efforts after it. *Bishop Thorold.*

133. Order my steps. The Psalmist recognizes and accepts his obligation to be subject to moral order. He prays that his daily life, not only in its large outlines but in its details, its "*steps*" may be ordered. The word "*order*" here combines two kindred ideas, "*regulation*" and "*establishment*." We need a rule of life, and we need also to become established in a habit of loyalty to that rule. The prayer, "*Order my steps*" is, therefore, a prayer for habitual subjection to Divine order. It is not a prayer for great spiritual impulses or spring-tides of emotion. It is a prayer that the life may be right, and always and persistently right. Perhaps the Church needs no less preaching about the state of the heart, but it needs more preaching going to show how spiritual conditions everywhere touch practical life. It is a very comfortable theory that evil is so mighty in human nature that a man may as well give up all idea of moral consistency, and go blundering along anyway, provided he feels that he is justified by faith. That theory will not stand the test of the Gospel. God's law, indeed, is perfect, while men are imperfect and weak, and they will inevitably stumble. The Lord Himself admits this in the very passage where He tells us that the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord. But granting all that, any faith which does not issue in character, any faith which does not put a man's life on the lines of moral order, any faith which calls weakly toward practical duty, any faith which does not charge his nature with the purpose, ever renewed amid all his lapses, to have his steps ordered in God's Word, is a sham and a delusion, and will shrivel like gauze in the judgment fire. Character is what the world wants of Christian men, and not raptures. The strongest argument the Gospel can bring to bear on the world is a man whose life is an embodiment of heavenly order, who carries the mark of his heavenly citizenship in his common intercourse distinctly, and who moves straight out on the line of God's Word, no matter whose word lies across the track. **In Thy Word.** Here we see

that the Psalmist recognizes the source and centre of all moral order. God is its centre and God's Word its manual, and to God he addresses himself in prayer, that he may be drawn and kept within the sphere of His heavenly order.

The Bible brings to bear upon a man a variety of influences, all tending to the ordering of his steps. First, it *centres* him. The Bible is, first of all, a revelation of God. It keeps God before him continually. All its own movement centres in God, all its sanctions are God's. There is no detail but is referred to God. There is no escape from God. He must love God first and above all. He must obey God at all hazards. His life must take its highest inspiration from God, his trust must be in God only, he must work on God's plans and be satisfied with God's measure and quality of success. God must be all and in all, and the very keynote of his daily thought must be, "*Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*" Secondly, it *regulates* him. The statutes of the Lord are right, and are meant, as some one has quaintly said, "*to set us to rights.*" It does not make itself superfluous. It does not bring man into the sphere of God's order, and leave him there, but it leads him along in that order, ordering every step until he steps from earth to heaven. Thirdly, it *restrains* him. There is no order without restraint. Restraint is implied in guidance. How clearly the Psalmist recognized this restraining quality of the Word when he said: "*Moreover by them is Thy servant warned; keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins.*" And then, fourthly, it *establishes* him. The Bible brings the element of fixedness more and more into our lives. We throw away from our ideas of life and duty, as we grow older, much which at one time appeared to us vital, and the Bible encourages us to throw it away; but we settle down more and more upon a few great, underlying truths—God, Christ, worship, obedience, purity, love to our neighbor; and more and more, year by year, the Bible fastens us to these, and reveals in them new power and longer reach and greater variety of application. We become established in our convictions as we learn more of Christ—the Truth. We become established in godly living as we find out for ourselves that godliness is profitable. We become established in our love for God's order, as we find, everywhere along its track, precious consolations, new hopes, substantial joys, sweet fellowships. So with these, and with its healthful and sometimes severe touch upon lax moral fibre and wavering resolution, the Bible builds up char-

acter, conveying into it more and more of the eternal stability of God's character, rooting and grounding it in love, establishing, strengthening, settling it in faith.

Well, then, may we join in the Psalmist's prayer, "Order my steps in Thy Word." This is not a text for special emergencies but for to-day and for to-morrow, and for every day, with its steps which lead us, now in many paths of routine, now through darkness, and now through light; for lives which are made up of multitudinous details, which are full of pettiness and of commonplace. We can take down into these no better prayer than this, "Order my steps in Thy Word." Out of these things character is built. The great distinguishing stamp which is set upon our life as a whole comes through the right ordering of these details. Then aim for this. Aim to contribute to the Church's work and to the world's welfare this high, grand gift of character. Aim to keep before that portion of society which you touch the spectacle of a life regulated by a higher law than the world's elastic law of expediency. And that you may do this, keep your lives in contact with the Word, and feed them from its living springs. So shall every step be ordered, and men as they behold you shall say, "He walks with God." V.

Let not iniquity have dominion.

It is not occasional surprisals, resisted workings, abhorred lusts, nor immediate injections of evil and blasphemous thoughts, *but only the ascendancy of sin in the affections* that proves its reigning power. The throne can admit but of one ruler, and, therefore, though grace and *iniquity* may and do co-exist within, they cannot be co-partners in one sovereignty. And it was the recollection of his continual forgetfulness and conscious weakness that prompted this prayer, *Order my steps in Thy Word*, implying that if his steps were not ordered, from want of their keeping, *iniquity* would regain its dominion.

How inestimably precious is the thought that deliverance from this cursed dominion is inseparably connected with a state of acceptance with God! The man who enjoys the unspeakable blessing of pardoned iniquity is he "in whose spirit there is no guile." He has a work done within him as well as for him. His Saviour is a whole Christ, "made of God unto him sanctification and" complete "redemption," as well as "righteousness." He comes to the cleansing fountain as the double cure of his *iniquity*, equally effectual to wash from its power as from its guilt. C. B.

135. Make Thy face to shine upon

Thy servant. The face of God shines upon us when, in His providence, we are guided and upheld; also when we are made to share in the good things of His providence, and when we are placed in a position wherein we can do much good. Much more does the face of God shine upon us when we are favored with tokens of His gracious favor; for then we grow under the consciousness of a loving God with rich supplies of His grace and Spirit. *J. Stephen.*—The believer's incessant cry is, Let me see "the King's face." This is a blessing worth praying for. It is his heart's desire, his present privilege, and, what is infinitely better, his sure, everlasting prospect. "*They shall see His face.*" The prayers of the Old Testament Church are not more distinguished for their simplicity, spirituality, and earnestness than for their unfettered, evangelical confidence. When they approached the footstool of the Divine majesty with the supplications, "*Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant,*" *Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth,*" it was as if they had pleaded, "*Reconciled Father, Thou that sittest upon a throne of grace, look upon us! Abba, Father, be gracious to us!*" C. B.

Teach me Thy statutes. The man who reads or hears this Word of God unanimated by prayer and untaught by the Spirit is one who stands at the door of a temple he cannot enter; he holds the key of a treasury which he cannot unlock; he stands weak and thirsting beside a glorious and abounding torrent which he cannot stoop to drink. W. A. B.

136. Indignant grief for the dishonor done to God; amazement at the affecting spectacle of human blindness; detestation of human impiety; compassionate yearnings over human wretchedness and ruin, all combine to force tears of the deepest sorrow from a heart enlightened and constrained by the influence of a Saviour's love. This was our Master's spirit. And let none presume themselves to be Christians if they are destitute of "this mind that was in Christ Jesus;" if they know nothing of His melting compassion for a lost world, or of His burning zeal for His heavenly Father's glory. C. B.—Those that can look with dry and displeased eyes upon another's sin never truly mourned for their own. It is a godless heart that doth not find itself concerned in God's quarrel; and that can laugh at that which the God of heaven frowns at. *Bishop H.*

137. Righteous art Thou, O Lord. Essentially, originally, immutably, and universally, in all His ways and works of nature and grace; in His thoughts, purposes, counsels,

and decrees ; in all the dispensations of His providence ; in redemption, in the justification of a sinner, in the pardon of sin, and in the gift of eternal life through Christ. **And upright are Thy judgments.** They are according to the rules of justice and equity. He refers to the precepts of the Word, the doctrines of the Gospel, as well as the judgments of God inflicted on wicked men, and all the providential dealings of God with His people, and also the final judgment. *Gill.*—God's judgments are always just ; He never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice ; and, therefore, a gracious soul dares not cavil or question His proceedings. *T. Brooks.*

139. True zeal inflames the desires and affections of the soul. If it be true zeal, then tract of time, multitude of discouragements, falseness of men deserting the cause, strength of oppositions will not tire out a man's spirit. Zeal makes men resolute, difficulties are but whetstones to their fortitude, it steels men's spirits with an undaunted resolution. This was the zeal that burned in the Psalmist's heart. *A. Wright.*—His "*zeal*" could not endure that they should "*forget the words of his God.*" Zeal is a passion whose real character must be determined by the objects on which it is employed, and the principle by which it is directed. There is a true and a false zeal, differing as widely from each other, as a heavenly flame from the infernal fire. The zeal which marks the true disciple of our Lord is enlightened by the Word of God, and quickened into operation by the love of Christ. It is indeed the kindled fire of heavenly love, exciting the most earnest desires and constant efforts for the best interests of every child of man, so far as its sphere can reach ; and bounded only by a consistent regard to the general welfare of the whole. Thus earnest and compassionate in its influence, awakened to a sense of the preciousness of immortal souls, and the overwhelming importance of eternity, it is never at a loss to discover an extended sphere for its exercise. *C. B.*

Zeal any vital and conquering system must have. It is one of the manliest and mightiest attributes of our nature. To Christian character it is what heat is to the sun. Now, zeal implies convictions ; not loose, vague, slippery notions, so carelessly held as to breed unconcern, or so falsely spiritual as to melt away before the eye into thin, vapory generalities ; but convictions, definite, decided, special. These are the things that beget an honest zeal. *F. D. H.*

140. *Pure (is) Thy Word, exceedingly, and Thy servant loves it.* Pure—literally, purged, tried, assayed, refined, like precious metal. *A.*—In the original, "tried, refined, purified like gold in the furnace," absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them. *G. Horne.*

Therefore Thy servant loveth it. The Word of God is not only "*pure*," free from all base admixture, but it is a *purifier* ; it cleanses from sin and guilt every heart with which it comes into contact. "Now ye are clean," said Jesus Christ to His disciples, "by the Word which I have spoken unto you." It is this its pure quality, combined with its tendency to purify every nature that yields to its holy influence, that endears it to every child of God. Here it is that he finds those views of the Divine character, those promises, those precepts, those representations of the deformity of sin, of the beauty of holiness, which lead him, above all things, to seek conformity to the Divine image. Because it is altogether pure, and because it tends to convey to those who make it their constant study a measure of its own purity, the child of God loves it and delights to meditate in it day and night. *Morison.*—God's children love the Word for its purity. 'Tis not comfort only must draw our love, but holiness. This argues the life and power of grace when we would not have the law of God less strict than it is, but love it for this very reason, because it is strict and holy. You would not think a beggar loves you because he like your alms, but is loath to stay with you for your service and live under the orderly government of your family. Most men's love to the Word is such ; they delight in the comfort of it as an alms, but hate the duty of it as a task ; they had rather let the duties of it alone, if it could be without danger. But when your heart consents to the purity of the law, and you would choose that life which it points out to you rather than any life in the world, or the most absolute freedom that the heart of man can imagine, so that you love your Master the more because He has appointed such work—this is true affection to God and His Word. *Manton.*

141. I am small and despised. Our complaints and miseries arise in no small measure from our failure to grasp the real meaning and to understand the universal experience of life. It is of infinite importance to ourselves and to the world that we should not yield to these feelings. We need for ourselves, the

world needs for us as fellow-workers with God, all the joy, all the spring, all the elasticity, all the vigor, all the hope, which man will leave us. Our lot is nothing exceptional, nothing to complain of, nothing to be depressed at. It is just the common, the all but universal lot. Be good and true, and you cannot then be in reality or in the truth of things commonplace or insignificant. Each one of us is exactly as great as he is in God's sight and no greater. *Farrar.*

142. The original is better expressed thus: "Thy righteousness is righteousness everlastingly, and Thy law is truth." So the Septuagint. The English translation expresses the *perpetuity* of the righteousness, the original expresses also the *character* of it. Both statements are absolute. There is only this righteousness and only this truth.

143. The believer is never long at ease. He is in the world; he is in the flesh; there is indwelling sin; there are enemies around; there is the great enemy; besides all this, the Lord, for wise purposes, hides His face. Then the believer is in trouble and anguish. *J. Stephen.* — The child of God whose thoughts are habitually occupied in the Word will always find it to be his food and light, his joy and strength, witnessing within the presence and power of God. But specially is affliction the time that unfolds the *delights of the Word*, such as more than counterbalance the painful *trouble and anguish* of the flesh. Such cheering prospects of hope and deliverance does it set forth! Such mighty supports in the endurance of trial does it realize! So the bitterness of the cross best realizes the *delights of the commandments*. C. B.

144. Jehovah's testimonies are forever righteous, so that all creatures must ascribe to them the honor of being in agreement with what is absolutely right. To have an ever-deepening insight into this their perfection is the growing life of the Spirit. For this life-giving insight the Psalmist prays. D.

The Word of the Lord has a mighty power over men. It has power over the intellect. It touches all its mystic springs, infusing new life. It opens up new wonders to newly awakened and more sensitive faculties. New suggestions of Divine wisdom, new motives for human action are seen. Light is poured around the new man, like one suddenly awaked from sleep. His intellect is taxed with new tasks, and he finds his ability growing with his desire. The

Bible is thought-inspiring and suggestive. In this respect it contrasts with the best of human works. Whenever its Divine pages are opened Divine truth shines forth in some new light. And it is a light that warms as well as illuminates. Not like the cold philosophies of infidelity, whose glimmering glare pierces not through the mists of our beclouded natures, this dissipates the clouds and warms the heart. The power of the Word reaches to the life. There is no greater evidence of the divinity of the Bible than is shown in its effects on a man's life. It still lives, and guides, and directs, and inspires, in all the worldly wisdom, and above all the worldly maxims which man has shaped his course by. The converted man, though living in the same world, is no longer the same to the world, nor is the world the same to him. New motives incite him, new affections draw him, and new objects induce him. The power of this Word goes through life, and reaches to the shades of death; yes, even beyond death. Not even human sympathy, with its affectionate, beautiful ministries, can soothe now. Nature has not a word. Love speaks only in sobs. But when I open the Bible God lifts the cloud, and on its silver lining I read, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," and I am comforted. He takes me by the hand, and I can look on the face of my dead without sorrowing; for He whispers softly in my ear, "He doeth all things well." This word not only reconciles us to the death of our friends, but enables us to meet it ourselves without fear. We shrink back, we recoil as we approach its chilling gloom; but when we fall back on the arms of our Saviour God, and know that He laid His head there, our bondage of fear is broken, and we are jubilant in our freedom. *E. R. Beadle.*

Christians are not the Bible, after all, though they be the only Bible multitudes read. God has another Bible back of them, and that is the Bible God will support; that the standard He will bring and hold men to, and judge them by. His professed disciples may falsify every page, every doctrine, every precept; but that does not make it false. It abides notwithstanding, and will abide as eternal truth; its promises, its threatenings, its uttered doom will be accomplished. Now, cannot rational men see that this is the standard they ought to come to? Though all the Church were unmitigated blackness, there is light here. Does not the caviller see it is not enough that he has reasoned down

the Christian's life? There is no safety for him till he has gone beyond and reasoned down the Bible; not only blotted out the arguments arising from the Christian's practice, but blotted out the arguments also, embodied in God's great and authoritative sayings. But Christians, as a body, do *not* falsify the Bible. Certainly there are those who illustrate all its spirit and teaching; there are many who do this; they are lights in the world; they perfect, and point, and clinch the Bible argument. They speak in their life as God speaks in His Word. Is there any reason in making all this nothing? all this *light* nothing? all the sun's shining nothing; his spots everything? God calls attention to this light. Men choose the darkness; they might walk to heaven in this light; there is enough of it, and more than enough. They prefer to wrap themselves up in the darkness they find, and in that go down to death. They allow one professor's life that is wrong to sway them more than ten or twenty Christian lives that are right. Is there any reason in this? *G. Shepard.*

The Bible has stood the crucial test of translation in the languages of all quarters of the globe. From Greenland to Patagonia, in the western hemisphere; from Iceland through Europe and Asia to the Japanese and the Australians, in the eastern; from the Copts of Egypt to the Kafirs of South Africa; from the South Sea Islands of the Pacific through the oceans to Madagascar, the Bible has been rendered into their languages with triumphant success. Moses's history of the creation and of the early world; Joshua's wars and marches; the defeats and victories under the judges and kings; David's penitential prayers and Psalms of praise; Solomon's peerless proverbs; Isaiah's splendid imagery; Jeremiah's doleful lamentations; Luke the physician's wonderful life-pictures of Christ on earth, and of the founding

of the early Christian Church; Paul's masterly orations at Athens, and before the Sanhedrim and Felix, and his doctrinal epistles, so full of strong meat; John's marvellous revelation—these all come with the same force, and adaptedness, and sweetness, and conviction, in each of the more than two hundred languages into which the Divine Book has been already translated, and witness to us that, in this respect, *it is perfect.* *Chamberlain.*

It is immensely to the advantage of the Book which comes to guide us into the blessed way that it has all the fascinations of a matchless literature. This is a great thing for a book that is to be daily in our hands, and to be put into the tongues of the world! What do we not owe to its endless variety and its multiform riches? *Haydn.*—It contains the very wisdom of nineteenth of all that is best and noblest in the literature of all mankind. There is scarcely any noble part of knowledge worthy of the mind of man, but from Scripture it may have some direction and light. The hundred best books, the hundred best pictures, the hundred best pieces of music, are ten times over involved in it. "The literature of grace," says one, "which goes up like incense from the land of temples, has not half the influence of this book of a despised nation." The sun never sets upon its gleaming page. "What a book," exclaimed the skeptical poet Heine, after a day spent in the unwonted task of reading it. "Vast and wide as the world, rooted in the abysses of creation and towering up beyond the blue secrets of heaven; sunrise and sunset, promise and fulfilment, birth and death, the whole drama of humanity, are all in this book." "In this Book," said Ewald, the foremost of modern critics, when Dean Stanley visited him, and the New Testament which was lying on the table fell accidentally to the ground—"in this Book," he said, as he stooped to pick it up, "is all the wisdom of the world." *Farrar.*

PSALM CXIX. 145-160.

VERSES 145-160.

פ KOPH.

145 I HAVE called with my whole heart ; an-
 swer me, O LORD :
 I will keep thy statutes.
 146 I have called unto thee ; save me,
 And I shall observe thy testimonies.
 147 I prevented the dawning of the morning,
 and cried :
 I hoped in thy words.
 148 Mine eyes prevented the night watches,
 That I might meditate in thy word.
 149 Hear my voice according unto thy loving-
 kindness :
 Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy
 judgments.
 150 They draw nigh that follow after wicked-
 ness ;
 They are far from thy law.
 151 Thou art nigh, O LORD ;
 And all thy commandments are truth.
 152 Of old have I known from thy testimonies,
 That thou hast founded them for ever.

ר RESH.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me ;
 For I do not forget thy law.
 154 Plead thou my cause, and redeem me :
 Quicken me according to thy word.
 155 Salvation is far from the wicked ;
 For they seek not thy statutes.
 156 Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD :
 Quicken me according to thy judgments.
 157 Many are my persecutors and mine adver-
 saries ;
 Yet have I not swerved from thy testi-
 monies.
 158 I beheld the treacherous dealers, and was
 grieved ;
 Because they observe not thy word.
 159 Consider how I love thy precepts :
 Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy
 lovingkindness.
 160 The sum of thy word is truth ;
 And every one of thy righteous judgments
 endureth for ever.

145. Called with my whole heart.

There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, ac-
 cepted, or rewarded by God but that wherein
 the heart is sincerely and wholly. God neither
 loves halting nor halving ; He will be served
 truly and totally. The royal law is, "Thou
 shalt love and serve the Lord thy God with all
 thy heart, and with all thy soul." God hears
 no more than the heart speaks. If the heart be
 dumb, God will certainly be deaf. *T. Brooks.*

146. Save me. From my sins, my temp-
 tations, all the hindrances that lie in my way,
 that I may "*keep Thy testimonies.*" We must
 cry for salvation, not that we may have the
 ease and comfort of it, but that we may have
 an opportunity of serving God the more cheer-
 fully. H. — "*Save me,*" includes a sinner's
 whole need—pardon, acceptance, access, holi-
 ness, strength, comfort, heaven, all in one word
 —Christ. *Save me*—from self, from Satan, from
 the world, from the curse of sin, from the
 wrath of God. This is the need of every mo-
 ment to the end. C. B.

The prayer may be short ; but if it come hot

from the heart of one in the thick of the battle,
 will it not reach the ear to which it is sent ?
 A few words—Lord, save us ! we perish—roused
 up the Redeemer to save His disciples from the
 devouring sea. Ah ! these prayers of men that
 struggle are dear to Him that hears them ; they
 consecrate a life, they make a man's heart a
 very church or temple in which worship is con-
 tinually offered. *Archbishop of York.*

147. It is the lonely, confidential intercourse
 with our God that makes our closest walk with
 God. *Secret prayer is most likely to be true
 prayer. There is no true prayer without it.*
 The consecrated heart will always find time for
 secret duties, and will rather redeem it from
 sleep than lose it from prayer. C. B.

One of Melancthon's correspondents de-
 scribes Luther thus : "I cannot enough admire
 the extraordinary cheerfulness, constancy,
 faith, and hope of the man in these trying and
 vexatious times. He constantly feeds these
 gracious affections by a very diligent study of
 the Word of God. *Then not a day passes in
 which he does not employ in prayer at least three*

of his very best hours. Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious God! what spirit and what faith is there in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was in the Divine presence; and yet with as firm a hope and confidence as he would address a father or a friend. 'I know,' said he, 'Thou art our Father and our God; and therefore I am sure Thou wilt bring to nought the persecutors of Thy children. For shouldst Thou fail to do this, Thine own cause being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely Thine own concern. We, by Thy providence, have been compelled to take a part. Thou therefore wilt be our defence.' While I was listening to Luther praying in this manner, at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, and yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him, in the course of his prayer, insisting upon the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure his petitions would be granted." *Milner's History.*

148. *That I might meditate in Thy Word.* Meditation was the food of his hope, and the solace of his sorrow; the one theme upon which his thoughts ran was that blessed "Word" which he continually mentions, and in which his heart rejoices. He preferred to forego necessary sleep for much more necessary devotion. It is instructive to find meditation so constantly connected with fervent prayer; it is the fuel which sustains the flame.

149. According unto Thy loving-kindness. When God hears prayer according to His lovingkindness He overlooks all the imperfections of the prayer. He forgets the sinfulness of the offerer, and in pitying love He grants the desire though the suppliant be unworthy. It is according to God's lovingkindness to answer speedily, to answer frequently, to answer abundantly; yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but lovingkindness is doubly dear. S.—By *quickening* he means the renewing and increasing in him the vigor of his spiritual life. He beggeth that God would revive, increase, and preserve that life which He had already given, that it might be perfected and consummated in glory. He would be ever ready to bring forth the habits of grace into acts. *Manton.*—What a plea is it to ask for *quickening* influences, that this is the very end for which this gift of *lovingkindness* was vouchsafed, and that the gift itself is the channel

through which the quickening life of the Godhead is imparted! Could I ask for this grace on any other ground than *lovingkindness*? All ground of fitness or merit is swept away. C. E.

150, 151. They are "*nigh*" to persecute and destroy me; thou art *nigh*, O Lord, to help me. P.—Thou art not only mightier than they, and therefore *able* to help me against them, but nearer than they, and therefore *ready* to help. It is the happiness of saints that when trouble is near God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and Him. He is never far to seek, but He is within our call, and means are within His call (Deut. 4: 7). H.

Thou art near. Even in the book of Thy providence, dark and mysterious though it be, I see Thee. There I read Thy *wisdom*, as developed in Thy world, Thy Church, Thy saints; the wisdom that guides, that guards, that bestows, that encourages, that corrects. There do I read Thy *power*, Thy *justice*, Thy *faithfulness*, Thy *holiness*, Thy *love*. But it is in Thy Son, Thy beloved Son, that I most clearly and distinctly see Thee as near. If in creation, if in providence, Thou art near, in Him Thou art very near, O Lord. J. H. Evans.

152. Mark this eternal basis of "the testimonies of God." The whole plan of redemption was emphatically "*founded forever*;" the Saviour was "*foreordained before the foundation of the world*." The people of God were "*chosen in Christ before the world began*!" The great Author "*declares the end from the beginning*," and thus clears his dispensations from any charge of mutability or contingency. When, therefore, the testimonies set forth God's faithful engagements with His people of old, the recollection that they are "*founded forever*" gives us a present and unchangeable interest in them. And when we see that they are grounded upon the oath and promise of God—the two "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie"—we may truly "have strong consolation" in venturing every hope for eternity upon this rock; nor need we be dismayed to see all our earthly dependencies—"the world, and the fashion of it—passing away" before us.

154. Plead Thou my cause. If there is an accuser to resist, "*we have an Advocate*" to *plead*, who could testify of His prevailing acceptance in the court of heaven, "Father, I thank Thee, that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me alway." Our Redeemer does indeed *plead our cause* successfully for our *deliverance*. C. B.

"*Quicken me.*" We had this prayer in the last section, and we shall have it again and

again in this. It is a desire which cannot be too often felt and expressed. As the soul is the centre of everything, so to be quickened is the central blessing. It means more love, more grace, more faith, more courage, more strength. God alone can give this quickening; but to the Lord and giver of life the work is easy enough, and he delights to perform it. S.

According to Thy Word. There are only two ways of knowing the Lord, and these are inseparable. *First*, by the letter of His Word; *secondly*, by the Spirit's application of the letter of the Word. I have these two lights to guide me; the light of the book *before my eyes*; the light of the Holy Ghost *in my heart*. R. Hill.

155. *Salvation is far from them, because they are far from God's law.* It does not fly from them, but they fly from it. Nay, such is their pride, that "they desire not the knowledge of His ways." They say to God, "Depart from us;" God therefore will say to them, "Depart from Me." They say to Christ, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" He will say of them, "Those Mine enemies, that would not I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." It is not then so much God that punishes them, as they that punish themselves. C. B.

156. *Great are Thy tender mercies, O Lord.* The goodness of God's nature, as it is His glory, so it is the joy of all the saints; His mercies are tender, for He is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, a fountain that can never be exhausted; He is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him. He had spoken of the misery of the wicked, but there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not *despised the riches of those mercies*. H.

Quicken me. He pleads the largeness of God's mercy; yea, he speaks of *mercies* many, mercies tender, mercies great; and with the glorious Jehovah he makes this a plea for his one leading prayer, the prayer for quickening. Quickening is a great and tender mercy; and it is many mercies in one. Will not one so tender breathe new life into him? S.

158. I was grieved. A fellowship with the joys of angels over repenting sinners will be accompanied with godly sorrow over the impenitency of those who "*keep not the Word of God.*" C. B.

159. He appeals to God concerning his love to His precepts; "Lord, Thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as Thou usest to deal with those that love Thy

Word. He does not say, "Consider how I *fulfil* Thy precepts;" he was conscious to himself that in many things he came short; but, "Consider how I *love* them." Our obedience is *then* only pleasing to God and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love. H.—He saith not, consider how I *perform* Thy precepts, but how I *love* them. The comfort of a Christian militant is rather in the sincerity and fervency of his affections than in the perfection of his actions. He fails many times in his obedience to God's precepts in regard of his action; but there is a grief in his soul that he should find in himself any will or desire contrary to the holy will of the Lord his God; and this proves an invincible love in him to the precepts of God. W. Cowper.

His petition thereupon, "Quicken me to do my duty with vigor; revive me, keep me alive; not according to any merit of mine, though I love Thy Word, *but according to Thy lovingkindness*;" to that we owe our lives; nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's *lovingkindness* will quicken us. H.—Often as the Psalmist had repeated his prayer for quickening grace, it was not a "*vain repetition.*" Each time was it enlivened with abundant faith, intense feeling of his necessity, and the vehemency of most ardent affection. If the consciousness of the faintness of our strength and the coldness of our affections should lead us to offer this petition a hundred times a day in this spirit, it would never fail of acceptance. C. B.

Let us ever maintain for the Spirit of Truth—and more than ever in these days, in which we are wont to hear the gravest truths of revelation questioned, or diluted, or overlooked—His own unparticipated right to illumine man; not indeed by making man no longer man, but by feeding the affections with holy food, by inviting them to holy objects. In this work He is alone. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." The old and the new creation are alike exclusively Divine. The revelation of God itself dare not dispute this honor with the Everlasting Spirit. That revelation is written in a language familiar to our daily thoughts and converse; it speaks of life, and death, and faith, and hope, and love—all household words, which in their earthly acceptance every man can speak of and define; but to *pass* from the earthly term to the heavenly purport, from the life of the flesh to the life of the spirit, from the love and hope that are entangled among creatures of clay to the love and hope that are busy

among the immortal realities of heaven—this is an art which the Spirit that inspired the Scriptures *alone* can teach to the man who reads them. W. A. B.

160. The Bible is like an ever-flowing fountain. Take what we will, and as much as we will, we ever leave more than we take to satisfy the wants of others. Neither the writers nor the thinkers of any one age can exhaust its fulness. For nearly eighteen centuries men have thought and written upon that one book, and if for eighteen more centuries men so write, yet will there still remain much that calls for fresh examination and fuller inquiry; new knowledge to be won, old truths to be better and more fully understood. The books of men have their day, and then grow obsolete. God's Word is like Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Time passes over it, but it ages not. Its power is as fresh as if God spake it but yesterday. *R. Payne Smith.*

There are ideas there the world has not yet

fathomed; there are words and figures there whose rich significance interpretation has not yet exhausted. The scriptural style and the scriptural language are not meant for one age, but for all ages. Its Orientalisms will grow in the west; its archaisms will be found still young in the nineteenth century. Science is ever changing as it is ever unfinished, its language is ever becoming obsolete as it is ever superseded, philosophy is continually presenting some new phase of its ever-revolving cycles, the political world is ever a dissolving view, literature becomes effete and art decays, "but the Word of our God shall stand forever." Not so sure are the types of nature as even the form and feature of this written Word, if it be indeed the *Word of God*, uttered in humanity, breathed into human souls, informing human emotions, conceived in human thoughts, made outward in human images, and indissolubly bound, as the wondrous narrative of the supernatural, in the long chain of human history. *T. Lewis.*

PSALM CXIX., 161-176.

VERSES 161-176.

SHIN.

161 PRINCES have persecuted me without a cause;

But my heart standeth in awe of thy words.

162 I rejoice at thy word,
As one that findeth great spoil.

163 I hate and abhor falsehood;
But thy law do I love.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee,
Because of thy righteous judgments.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law;
And they have none occasion of stumbling.

166 I have hoped for thy salvation, O LORD,
And have done thy commandments.

167 My soul hath observed thy testimonies;
And I love them exceedingly.

168 I have observed thy precepts and thy testimonies;

For all my ways are before thee.

TAU.

169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD:

Give me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee:
Deliver me according to thy word.

171 Let my lips utter praise;
For thou teachest me thy statutes.

172 Let my tongue sing of thy word;
For all thy commandments are righteousness.

173 Let thine hand be ready to help me;
For I have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD;
And thy law is my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;
And let thy judgments help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant;

For I do not forget thy commandments.

161. *My heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.* There is an awe of the Word that maketh us

tender of violating it or doing anything contrary to it. This is the fruit of holy love; it is

not afraid of the Word, but delighteth in it as it discovereth the mind of God to us; as in the next verse it is written, "I rejoice at Thy Word." This awe is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear. *Manton*.—The spirit of adoption produces a dread of sinning against the tenderest Father, of grieving the dearest Friend. And this awe of God will naturally extend to *His Word*, so that we shall be tenderly afraid of disregarding its dictates. There is nothing slavish or legal in this fear. It is the freedom and the holiness of the Gospel; the very soul of religion; the best preservative of our joys and privileges, and the best evidence of their Scriptural character. C. B.

162. Here is a book which provides for human nature as a whole, and which makes this provision with an insight and comprehensiveness that does not belong to the capacity of the most gifted men. Could any merely human authors have stood the test which the Old Testament has stood? Think what it has been to the Jewish people throughout the tragic vicissitudes of their wonderful history. Think what it has been to Christendom. For nineteen centuries it has formed the larger part of the religious hand-book of the Christian Church; it has shaped Christian hopes; it has largely governed Christian legislation; it has supplied the language for Christian prayer and praise. The noblest and saintliest souls in Christendom have one after another fed their souls on it, or even on fragments of it, taking a verse and shutting the spiritual ear to everything else, and in virtue of the concentrated intensity with which they have thus sought for days and weeks and months and years to penetrate the inmost secrets of this or that fragment of its consecrated language, rising to heroic heights of effort and endurance. Throughout the Christian centuries the Old Testament has been worked like a mine, which is as far from being exhausted to-day as in the apostolic age. Well might the old Hebrew poet cry: "I am as glad of Thy Word as one that findeth great spoils." *Liddon*.

The saints of God in all ages were taught by the same Spirit, looked for the same salvation, and were comforted by the same truths of God's Word. Hence the Word is so precious to them; for it causes their souls to rejoice. Hath a conqueror cause for rejoicing who hath obtained a complete victory over and is enriching himself with the spoils of a wealthy enemy? how much greater has the Christian daily from the Word of the Lord! The joy of the one is but momentary and uncertain. But joy through the victory of Jesus, and the spoils the Christian

reaps from His Word are durable and eternal. The victory of Christ Jesus is the Christian's spoil. Here he beholds sin subdued, death conquered, Satan vanquished, hell overcome, and a crown of eternal life and glory which shall be enjoyed. In the written Word of the Spirit are given unto us "exceeding great and precious promises." In the essential Word Jesus "all the promises are yea and amen to the glory of God." By the former we understand "what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of our inheritance in the saints." By union with Jesus and faith in Him we obtain the happy assurance that all things are ours. Blessed be God for the Word of His grace, the Bible; and for His unspeakable gift, Jesus. Here is Thy treasure, O Christian; where should thy heart be but in meditation and delight herein daily? For thou canst get spiritual joy from no object but Christ set before thee in the Gospel. The clearer thou seest salvation by Him, the stronger will be thy faith in Him. "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. 4:4). *W. Mason*.

163. *I hate and abhor lying.* A double expression for an inexpressible loathing. Falsehood in doctrine, in life, or in speech, falsehood in any form or shape, had become utterly detestable to the Psalmist. He does not, however, alone refer to falsehood in conversation; he evidently intends perversity in faith and teaching. He set down all opposition to the God of truth as lying, and then he turned his whole soul against it in the intensest form of indignation. Godly men should detest false doctrine even as they abhor a lie. "*But Thy law do I love,*" because it is all truth. His love was as ardent as his hate. S.

164, 165. Not merely morning and evening, but seven times; *i.e.*, over and over again, apprehending every impulse to pray, he thanks God for His Word, which decides so righteously and guides so correctly, which is a source of infinite peace to all them that love it, and provided with which one is not exposed to any danger of stumbling. D.

164. Seven times a day do I praise Thee. If we feel praise to be "good, comely, and pleasant," it will be as needless to define its frequency as to prescribe the limit of our service to a beloved friend to whom our obligations were daily increasing. We should aim at living in praise, as the element of our souls, the atmosphere of our enjoyment, our reward more than our duty—that which identifies our interest with heaven, and forms our meetness for it. C. B.

165. (There is) *much peace to the lovers of Thy law, and there is to them no stumbling-block.* Peace, in opposition to the disquietude inseparable from a course of sin. A stumbling-block is a common scriptural figure for an occasion of unbelief or sin. The idea here is that the best preservative against temptation is a love to God's commandments. A. — Here is the happiness of a child of God summed up in one word — *peace*. He *loves the law of his God*, and his heritage is *peace*. Every feature of the covenant bears some resemblance to its nature; full of grace, peace, and love. Two of the agents are fitly represented by the lamb and the dove — emblems of peace. The tendency of its principles "is first pure, then peaceable." Its present enjoyment and privilege, *peace, great peace*. Its end will be universal, eternal peace. C. B.

They who love Thy law. The Spirit of inspiration ever honors His own Word of truth. All peace, comfort, and joy are derived from it through faith. We shall suffer no loss if we suspend judgment on comforts till we have tried them by this touchstone of truth. Be on your guard against the flatteries of false peace and the delusions of unscriptural joys. *W. Mason.* — To enjoy a peace which sets us above the power of evil; which places us out of the reach of fortune; which inspires us with courage in the midst of danger; which opens our eyes to look through the gloomiest scenes of sorrow to the blessed hope of future glory; which establishes our hearts in a patient expectation of God's deliverance, so that nothing can terrify or dismay us; is that which the world can never give, and which can only proceed from the blessed Spirit of God, whose province it is to confirm the faithful to the end. This is that peace of which the Psalmist here speaks, and which is the peculiar lot and inheritance of the righteous, of him who loveth the law of God. Since this peace is but the forerunner of eternal peace, the earnest of future glory and immortality, it is worth all our pains to deny ourselves in this world, to take up our cross and follow Christ, to labor to do the whole will of God, that we may inherit that peace which belongs to those, and those only, "who love the law of God." *Bishop Sherlock.*

Study pure and holy walking if you would have your confidence firm, and have boldness and joy in God. A little sin will shake your trust and disturb your peace more than the greatest sufferings; yea, in the greatest extremity of sufferings, your assurance and joy in God will grow and abound most if sin be kept out. That is the trouble-feast that disquiets the

conscience, which, while it continues good, is a continual feast. So much sin as gets in, so much peace will go out. Afflictions cannot break in upon it to break it, but sin doth. All the winds which blow about the earth from all points stir it not, only that within it makes the earthquake. *Leighton.*

There is a perfect calm in the breasts of those who not only do the will of God, but "love" to do it. They are at peace with God by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves by the answer of a good conscience and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men by the spirit of charity. No external troubles can rob them of this "great peace," no "offences" or stumbling-blocks, which are thrown in their way by persecution, or temptation, by the malice of enemies, or by the apostasy of friends, by anything which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain, or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and runs with delight the way of God's commandments. *G. Horne.*

The Christian soul is one that has come unto God and rested in the peace of God. It dares to call Him Father without any sense of daring. It is in such confidence toward Him that it even partakes His confidence in Himself. It turns adversity into peace, for it sees a friendly hand ministering only good in what it suffers. In dark times it is never anxious, for God is its trust and God will suffer no harm to befall it. *H. B.* — A consistent Christian may not have rapture, but he has that which is much better than rapture, calmness—God's serene and perpetual presence. Religion's best gift, rest, serenity, the quiet daily love of one who lives perpetually with his Father's family, uninterrupted usefulness—that belongs to him who has lived steadily and walked with duty, neither grieving nor insulting the Holy Spirit of his God. The man who serves God early has the best of it; joy is well in its way, but a few flashes of joy are trifles in comparison with a life of peace. Which is best, the flash of joy lighting up the whole heart, and then darkness till the next flash comes, or the steady, calm sunlight of day in which men work? *F. W. R.*

They have none occasion of stumbling. Hebrew, "they shall have no stumbling-block" (1 John 2:10), "There is none occasion of stumbling in him" who abides in the light, which makes him to see and avoid such stumbling-blocks. Wealth, tribulation, temptation, which are the occasion to many of falling, are not so to him. *Fausset.* — When God's law is loved, instead of being struggled against, the

conscience is at peace, and the inward eye is clear; a man sees his duty and does it, free from those stumbling-blocks which are ever occasion of falling to others. P.—They that have this character of God's children will not be stumbled at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their troubles, and a sure covenant to rest upon. *Bunyan*.

It is evidently our Father's will that His children's complete acceptance should not be with them a matter of present uncertainty. He intends not only that they should reach heaven at last, but that heaven should commence on earth in a state of conscious security and peace; not only that *they should have eternal life, but that they should know that they have it* (1 John 5 : 13). The Gospel, instead of forbidding this privilege, warrants, produces, and establishes it; for the conviction of the professor, the excitement of the slumbering, and the encouragement of the weak. Yet we must not so identify assurance with faith as to conclude all that are destitute of it to be unbelievers. "The assurance of faith," as it properly respects a *dependence upon the record*, is indeed the essential principle of Christian life. But "the assurance of hope," a *conscious interest in the record, the real privilege of assurance*, seems to be a distinct and separable idea. The Scripture seems fully to warrant the distinction prevalent among the Puritan divines, that assurance is "*necessary to the Christian for his well-being, not for his being*," for his consolation and establishment, not for his salvation. C. B.

166. The first clause expresses the aspiration of his soul; the second, his performance of the conditions of success. He hopes for salvation, and to gain it observes God's commandments, which is the only rational way. If any man wishes the Lord to save him, let him follow the Lord's direction. C.

This is the true posture in which all the servants of God should desire to be found, hoping in His mercy and doing His commands. It is the hope of salvation which is the great and pervading motive to holiness, and it is the consciousness of obedience to the will of God which strengthens our hope of interest in the Divine mercy. *J. Morison*.—We cannot upon good grounds hope for God's salvation unless we set ourselves to do His commandments (Rev. 22 : 14). But those that sincerely endeavor to do His commandments ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the

hope is the more lively the obedience will be. H.

"Faith, which worketh by love," is no less the characteristic of the Old than of the New Testament Church. For mark here the principle and the object of faith, "*I have hoped for Thy salvation*," and the practical influence of faith, I have "*done Thy commandments*." This "*hope for the Lord's salvation*" is built on His faithfulness, not on our sincerity; on His promises, not on our frames; on His unchangeableness, not on our constancy. It is built not on the work of grace in us, but on the work of Christ for us—a work which has satisfied every claim, provided every security, and pledged all the Divine perfections on our behalf—a work finished and complete. But this "assurance of hope," even in its weakest and lowest influence, is a practical principle, "*I have done Thy commandments*." "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Hence the most assured believers will be the most devoted servants of their Master.

167. Let not our consciousness of daily failures restrain this strong expression of confidence. The most humble believer need not hesitate to adopt it "as an evidence of grace, not as a claim of merit." This frequent repetition marks the godly jealousy of the man of God, mindful of his own self-deceitfulness and manifold infirmities, "giving" careful "diligence" to "make his calling and election sure." He knew himself to be a poor sinner, but he was conscious of spirituality of obedience, "*exceeding love*" to the Word, and an habitual walk under the eye of his God, the evidences of a heart (often mentioned in the Old Testament) "perfect with Him." C. B.

Holy admiration of God's law is a powerful motive to obey, and it is produced by faith; for the soul in believing looks forth on the Law as brightly effulgent in the plan of redemption. Admiration of the law is admiration of infinite holiness, which is admiration of God. This is immensely more operative than cold approval of moral beauty or excellence; it takes a wider sweep; it goes nearer the primal source of all ethical relations; it gathers around conscience the kindling fires of ascending passion; it reflects the radiance of a personal glow from the face of Jesus Christ, who is our law. Personal holiness in perfection is the realization of law. Now, personal holiness in perfection not only is apparent in Jesus Christ, but is most of all apparent in His cross and passion. That which faith apprehends at the moment of the sinner's conversion is this very glory of God as it shines

in the face of Jesus Christ. The admiration of infinite loveliness can never rise higher than at this cross ; and thus the very belief which makes the sinner a trophy of free grace subjects him, at the same time, to a motive of obedience. J. W. A.

168. *I observe Thy precepts and Thy testimonies, because all my ways are before Thee.* He does not affect to be prompted by a love exclusive of all fear, but only of a slavish dread. He stands in awe of God's omniscience, and is influenced by dread of His disapprobation to obey His precepts, as well as by attachment to the law itself. *My ways, my courses of conduct, mode of life, behavior. Before Thee, open to God's infallible inspection, and subjected to His judgment.* A.—The Hebrew word *shamar*, that is here rendered *observe*, signifies to keep carefully, diligently, studiously, exactly. It signifies to keep as men keep prisoners, to keep as a watchman keeps the city or the garrison ; yea, to keep as a man would keep his very life. The reason that he kept the precepts and the testimonies of the Lord so carefully, so sincerely, so diligently, and so exactly you have in the latter words, "*for all my ways are before Thee.*" It is as necessary for him that would be eminent in holiness to set the Lord always before him, as it is necessary for him to breathe. T. Brooks. —Never let us lose sight of the recollection that "*all our ways are before God!*" that every act, every thought, every desire, every word, is registered by conscience as His vicegerent, and laid up in His book of remembrance ! Well would it be for us if we walked less before men and more "*before God,*" if in secret, in business, at home and abroad we heard the solemn voice : "*I am the Almighty God ; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.*"

169. The life of prayer is the "cry" of the heart to God. But we must see that our "*cry comes near before the Lord,*" that nothing blocks up the way or interrupts the communication. If we are believers, the way is open ; "the middle wall of partition is broken down." What an amount of privilege is it that this way to God is always open ; that, as members of Christ, we have not only "*access,*" but "*access with confidence,*" yea, with the same confidence as the Son of God Himself !

169, 170. It is beautiful to observe the oil of the Psalmist's faith feeding the flame of his supplication. Every petition is urged upon the warrant of a promise, "*according to Thy Word.*" The promises were the very breath of his supplication ; exciting his expectation for a favorable answer, and exercis-

ing his patience, until the answer should come. C. B.

171. *My lips shall pour forth praise ; for Thou wilt teach me Thy statutes.* The first verb means to cause to gush or flow, and here denotes eager, abundant, and unceasing praise. The last clause expresses the confident expectation of the blessing so often and importunately asked throughout the Psalm. As if he had said, Now shall my lips praise, for I am about to receive what I had prayed for ; Thou wilt indeed teach me Thy statutes. A.—How happy is it to bring to God a heart as large in praise as in prayer ! The answer of the supplication for *spiritual understanding and deliverance* naturally issues in the sacrifice of praise. To speak of God and for Him will be the desire and delight of him whose heart and lips have been taught to *pour forth praise.*

172. "Lord, open Thou my lips, that my tongue may speak of Thy Word." Honor me, O my God, by helping me to show that "*all Thy commandments are righteousness.*" In our own atmosphere and our own spirit how often do we pour out our words without waiting on the Lord for unction and power, speaking of the things of God without His sought presence and blessing ! Were we living fully in the atmosphere of prayer, enriched with habitual meditation in the Word, how much more fluent would our tongue be to *speak of His Word* "to the use of edifying !"

173. Help me. Dependence is a principle of deep humility and mighty energy. The thought that we are entering into work in the Lord's strength is a great stay. Blessed be God for the *help laid for us upon One that is mighty,* so that *when we are most weak, then are we most strong !* "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, '*Fear not, I will help thee*'" (Isa. 41 : 12). C. B.

174. He was a partaker both of pardoning mercy and of sanctifying grace ; yet still he longed for more of this salvation, that is, for a more assured faith of pardoning mercy and larger measures of sanctifying grace. Grace is not contented with a little ; on the contrary, the more it hath received, the more it desires to receive. R. Walker.

175. It is as natural for the *living* soul to *praise* as for the living man to *speak*. And is not *the life* that the Psalmist is now praying for the *salvation* for which he was *longing* ? The taste that he has received makes him hunger for a higher and continued enjoyment ; not for any selfish gratification, but that he might employ himself in the *praise of his God*. The close of

this Psalm exhibits that pervading character of praise which has been generally remarked in the concluding Psalms of this sacred book. C. B.

176. *I wander like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for Thy commandments I do not forget.* The English versions of the first clause (*I have gone astray*), although they adhere strictly to the form of the original, seem to make the primary idea that of sin, which is really included, but only as the cause of that which is directly intended; namely, misery, represented by the wandering of a lost and helpless sheep. *Seek Thy servant*, deliver from this wretched state one who is still Thy servant, and as such remembers Thy commandments, even in the midst of his worst sufferings. As the preceding verse sums up the petitions of the Psalm, so this sums up its complaints in the first clause and its professions in the last, connected by the short prayer (*seek Thy servant*) as by a single link. The predominant use of the past tense, even to the end, shows how deeply the entire Psalm is founded upon actual and previous experience. A.

A mixture of confession, of entreaty, and of holy resolution, which should meet in our prayers. "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," is the confession; "oh, seek Thy servant," is the entreaty; "I do not forget Thy commandments," is the penitent and holy resolution. Without some such resolution either conceived or expressed there could indeed be no acceptable because no true prayer. To say, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," would be mere mockery if there was not at the same time in the heart the good purpose, "I do not forget Thy commandments." But because that good purpose will not of itself prevail, but we should ever have to repeat in spite of it our confession of having gone astray like a sheep that is lost, therefore the entreaty for help is well interposed between them, and we say, and must say ever, "Oh, seek Thy servant." May Thy help change my weak purpose into a strong and victorious resolution, that I may not go astray, but really and truly remember Thy commandments, remember them to do them. Thus confessing that we are Christ's, declaring that we must pray to Him, that we cannot live without Him; that we go astray like a sheep that is lost, and must therefore implore Him to seek us and to save us; shall we not then be more ready to follow Christ's commandments also without shame, and to do, or set ourselves heartily to do, all His holy and perfect will? *T. Arnold.*

There could not possibly be a more appropriate conclusion of such a Psalm as this, so full of the varied experience and the ever-

changing frames and feelings even of a child of God, in the sunshine and the cloud, in the calm and in the storm, than this ever-clinging sense of his propensity to wander, and the expression of his utter inability to find his way back without the Lord's guiding hand to restore him; and at the same time with it all, his fixed and abiding determination never to forget the Lord's commandments. What an insight into our poor wayward hearts does this verse give us; not merely liable to wander, but ever wandering and losing our way, even while cleaving to God's commandments! But at the same time what a prayer does it put into our mouths, "*Seek Thy servant*;" "I am Thine, save me." Yes, blessed be God! there is One mighty to save. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." *Bouchier.*—And thus will our Christian progress be checkered, until we reach the regions of unmixed praise, where we shall no more mourn over our wanderings, no longer feel any inclination to err from our Shepherd's presence, no more experience the wretchedness of distance from Him, or the difficulty of returning to Him, where we shall be eternally safe in the heavenly fold, to "go no more out." C. B.

It is impossible to read these Psalms without feeling that those who wrote them were, in their inner spiritual life, living under the Gospel; resting not in a law of works, but in a law of faith. And the reason of this was that they saw, and with no indistinct vision, the same mind and will of God as that which was manifested in Christ, and that wherever those are seen, however faintly, there something at least of the joy of forgiveness and reconciliation is felt accordingly, and men rise, or at least begin to rise from the fear which hath torment to the perfect love which casteth out fear. To these men God was known as a Father; they felt that amidst all their stubbornness and their many transgressions they were still the children whom He had nourished and brought up. He who sat between the cherubim was also He who led His people as a Shepherd leads His flock, and they, though they had gone astray, were still the sheep of His pasture. *E. H. Plumptre.*

Who will say that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like music that

can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness. Nay, it is worshipped with a positive idolatry, in extenuation of whose gross fanaticism its intrinsic beauty pleads availingly with the man of letters and the scholar. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its phrases. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments; and all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing, which doubt has never dimmed and controversy never soiled. It has been to him all along as the silent, but oh, how intelligible, voice of his guardian angel; and in the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible. *F. W. Faber (Roman Catholic).*

I have been seriously perplexed to know how the religious feeling, which is the essential base of conduct, can be kept up without the use of the Bible. For three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history. It forbids the veriest herd who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary interspace in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all kind according to its efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning the payment for their work? *Huxley.*

The more difficulties I have found in myself and in the world, the more help has the Bible been to me. The Bible is not the cause of my perplexities, but the resolver of them. Of course there are a multitude of things in it which I do not understand; a multitude more in myself which I do not understand. But this has been my experience hitherto, and each year, almost each day, that experience is strengthened. Books of the Bible which were lying in shadow for me, in which I could see little meaning, have come forth into clearness, because I met with hard passages in myself or in society which I

could not construe without their help. And I have found this to be the case more and more in proportion as I have rested my faith on the God whom the Bible declares to me. Because I have heard Christ for myself speaking to me out of this Book, and speaking to me in my heart, I know that He is indeed that Saviour who should come into the world. *Maurice.*

Every living soul may have, and every Christian soul does have, direct access for himself to the living Lord, the Eternal Word. Christ is the Teacher, the only Teacher, the Teacher for all men, the Teacher of all truth. He only is our Master, and gathered at His feet all we are brethren. It is His living influence that flows to us through the channel of His Word. It is His voice that speaks to us in all providences. It is He who makes the syllables that come from human lips eloquent to reach our understanding, and to calm and gladden our hearts. In every region of Christian culture and tuition, the real source of all the blessing is Christ Himself, and the real Master, Example, and Authority, Instructor, and Trainer is that ever-living Lord, who speaketh from heaven, who speaketh in His servants' hearts, who uses as His medium the Book which records His life and death, and subordinately the events of life and the tongues of men; but is Himself the breath which breathes through these all. Is not this great and yet simple principle one that we sorely need to be reminded of, and to grasp more firmly? We think far too much of that Lord as a Lord gone from us, whose influence consists only in what He was and did. Blessed be His name! His influence is all built upon what He did once which lives forever, and the record of that is the great means which He uses for our instruction in righteousness. But it is no merely past Saviour that we have to look to for teaching, but the presence of an ever-living Lord; that active presence in the souls of all believers, that pleading approach to the souls of all who hear of His love; who hour by hour is seeking to bring us all closer to Himself. *A. M.*

It is when Christ quickens us that we call upon His name; when Christ teaches us that we keep the way of His statutes unto the end, when Christ cleanses us that we are made whiter than the snow; when Christ comforts us that we draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation; when Christ shines upon us with the light of His countenance that we are filled with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; when Christ opens the windows of heaven and sends down upon us showers of the richest blessing, that we spring up like willows by the water-

courses, and bring forth fruit like Lebanon. J. A. W.

Those blessings which constitute the Christian's portion, Truth, Love, Beauty, Goodness, may become the common possession of myriads, each one of whom may yet be said to possess the whole. The same truths which fill my mind may become the spiritual nutriment of all my fellow-believers, undiminished to me though other minds apprehend them. The love to Christ which burns in one Christian's breast does not become enfeebled if other hearts catch the flame from his, but rather by contact of congenial elements glows in each separate heart with a fervor all the more intense. The peace of God may be diffused through the spirits of a multitude which no man can number, and yet each redeemed soul may say of it, "It is all my own;" nay, better than if all or exclusively his own; for it is a peace, a joy, a happiness, which, by the electric flash of sympathy passing from heart to heart, becomes, by reason of the multitudes who share it, redoubled, multiplied, boundlessly increased to each. *Caird.*

If, in respect of its authorship and origin, the Bible be the Saviour's Book, in regard of its destination and object, it is no less truly the sinner's Book. It is not a meditation, but a message, a message from God to you and to me. It announces not God's thoughts about the universe, but God's thoughts and intentions about ourselves. It is not a speculative Book, but one intensely practical. It is a solemn Book to deal with; for just as it bears salvation in its bosom, so it carries Jehovah's seal and sanction on its brow; as it brings salvation to our houses, so it carries back to God a report of that reception which we give to Himself and His beloved Son, Himself and His great salvation. And it is a Book entirely unique. If from it we cannot find how to be happy in God's favor now, and how to secure a blessed immortality by and by, there is no book, no being in the world from whom we can ascertain it. *Hamilton.*

Let all, then, live the lives of believing men; at peace with God; rooted and grounded in love; free, happy, earnest, self-denied; never losing hold of the free love of God, and never losing sight of the glory to be revealed; walking not only in the love of God, but in the law of God, which is holy, and just, and good, keeping our eye continually on the "statutes," and "judgments," and "testimonies," and "commandments" of the Lord our God, knowing that "great peace have they that love this law," and that it is to this that we are called: "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." *H. Bonar.*

We meet the mind that built the earth when we open the leaves of this Book of the World. It is the one bond of intellectual unity between countries and centuries. Other books pass away, however brilliant, however great. Only this abideth forever. And the skin-clothed spearman of the woods, converted to Christ, is brought through it to intellectual sympathy with the highest of Christian statesmen and scholars. The earliest age is linked to the latest through its influence upon each, and the figures that walk before our thought amid the auroral dawn of history stretch forward their hands to join and grasp in common love for it those white-robed saints who shine before us in coming ages, cinctured and crowned with millennial beauty. It is a Book full of stimulating force and purifying power. It is a vast treasury of intellectual and moral appeal, by which whoever lovingly ponders it shall be impressed, impenetrated, transformed, made a son or daughter of the Almighty, and assimilated in spirit to all that is godlike. Its fruits are seen in public life as well as in private. All welfare comes from it inspirations, and the best civilizations are conditioned on its power. *R. S. S.*

PSALM CXX.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

- 1 IN my distress I cried unto the LORD,
And he answered me.
2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying
lips,
And from a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given unto thee, and what shall
be done more unto thee,
Thou deceitful tongue?

- 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty,
With coals of juniper.
5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar
6 My soul hath long had her dwelling
With him that hateth peace.
7 I am for peace :
But when I speak, they are for war.

THIS is the first of fifteen Psalms (120-134) all bearing the inscription, *song of ascents* or *upgoings*, i.e., sung during the periodical journeys or pilgrimages to Jerusalem at the times of the great yearly festivals. On these occasions the people are said, even in historical prose, to *go up* to Jerusalem, in reference both to its physical and moral elevation. The Hebrew verb employed in such connections is the root of the noun *ascents* in these inscriptions. This explanation of the title is much more satisfactory than any other which has been proposed. A.—In all probability the term is derived from the various “ascents,” or stations, by which the pilgrims to the feasts came up to Jerusalem. Perhaps these songs were intended as pilgrim-songs for the various companies who were wont to go up together to the mountain of the Lord with music and singing (compare Isa. 30 : 29). But whether actually used for this purpose or not, they present such remarkable unity as to mark them out as one series, intended to express the feelings of a devout Israelite on beholding Jerusalem and the Temple, and recalling the history and the hopes connected therewith. A. E.

Thrice every year, at the beginning and at the close of the wheat harvest, and again when the grapes were gathered and the wine made—at these natural seasons of joy and festivity every “son of the law” had to appear before God. So musical a people as the Jews would be sure to beguile the way with songs; so religious a people, bound, too, on an errand so sacred, would be sure to sing religious songs. And, therefore, we may reasonably infer, as most of our leading critics do infer, that these “Songs of the Goings-up” were the Psalms

with which the Hebrew pilgrims lightened the way as, year by year, they went up to the Temple to keep the great feasts of their ecclesiastical calendar. Cox.—The whole group of Psalms is full of that blending of joy and sorrow, of triumph and aspiration, which were so strikingly characteristic of Israel, and which the great feasts were so eminently calculated to express and deepen. W. Milligan.

We may fully accept the view advocated by Hengstenberg, Alexander, and many others as to the sense—viz., *songs of the upgoings*, i.e., songs prepared to be sung by the exiles returning from Babylon to Jerusalem, and also subsequently on their stated journeys going up to the holy city to attend the three great annual festivals. This theory accounts well, both for the leading thoughts and also for the local allusions found in these Psalms. The thoughts meet the case of the restored Jews and their re-established temple worship. This noun (*ascents* or *upgoings*) and its verb are used repeatedly for these *goings up*; the presence of the article (*the ascents*) favors its definite reference to some well-known and established journeys like these; the oldest of these songs (Psalm 122) contains these very words, naturally suggestive of the sense of this title: “Let us *go* into the house of the Lord” (v. 1); “whither the tribes *go up*” (v. 4); and finally, such circumstantial allusions as appear (Psalm 121 : 1) show that they were approaching the holy city: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help.” C.

With this Psalm begins a series of fifteen Psalms, all bearing the same title, “Songs of the Goings-up,” and constituting originally, no

doubt, a separate hymn-book—a Psalter within a Psalter. Of the different interpretations which have been given of the name the most probable is that which supposes that the Psalms to which this title is prefixed were intended to be sung by the caravans of pilgrims “going up” to keep the yearly feasts at Jerusalem. The collection in its present form must have been made after the return from Babylon, some of the songs containing manifest allusions to the captivity as still fresh in the recollection of the writers. All these odes have certain features in common. With one exception (the one hundred and thirty-second) they are all short—the utterance of a single thought or feeling, a sigh, a hope, a joy. They are alike in tone, in diction, in rhythm. They are all pervaded by the same quiet, graceful, tender beauty, the charm of which was so felt by a Spanish commentator, that he does not hesitate to say that this collection is to the rest of the Psalms what Paradise was to the rest of the world at its first creation. P.

It is not strange that Bible students love these pilgrim songs. They attach their great theological and moral utterances to the mind through simple and graphic picture-lessons. There is one word which of itself gives them a lasting hold upon the thought and feeling of all Christian ages, and which gathers all their truths and illustrations into one sheaf. The emotion which shook the Hebrew’s heart whenever Jerusalem was named pervades them all. Each pilgrim has his eye upon Moriah while he sings, as the Moslem turns to Mecca in his prayer. Jerusalem! The glory of Solomon, the loved goal of generations of pilgrims, the bitter memory of the exile by the Euphrates, the sorrow of Jesus, the inspiration of Macca-bæus, the fiery text of Peter the Hermit, the battle-cry of Godfrey and of Tancred—pervaded, even in eclipse, with that subtle attraction which drew two centuries against its walls in successive billows of blood, burden of mediæval hymns, touched with the glow of Dante’s verse and moving Tasso to immortal song, God’s own type of eternal rest, of a perfect society, and of a pure Church—so has the name passed into Christian thought and Christian song, that he who thinks of heaven has always the yearning of Bernard’s hymn in his heart, if not its words upon his lips :

“ Jerusalem the glorious !
The glory of the elect.
O dear and future vision
That eager hearts expect !

Ev’n now by faith I see thee,
Ev’n here thy walls discern ;
To thee my thoughts are kindled,
And strive, and pant, and yearn.”

They are no less sermons for being poems. Their lessons are human, not local, fitting as aptly into the nineteenth century as into their own era ; as fresh and as wholesome to-day as when the Hebrew pilgrim beguiled with their melody his way through the desert, or chanted them in the streets of his beloved city ; and as the shadows lengthen and the degrees grow fewer by which we mount to the Jerusalem above, these pilgrim songs will be oftener on our lips, till we exiles tread the streets where they sing a new song, and need no more the shade at noon and the watch by night. V.

The tone and diction of this one hundred and twentieth Psalm mark it as belonging to the period of the Restoration. It begins with an acknowledgment of that great mercy (v. 1), followed by a prayer for deliverance from treacherous and spiteful enemies (v. 2), and a confident anticipation of their punishment (vs. 3, 4), but closes with a further lamentation and complaint of present suffering (vs. 5-7). In this, as in all the other Psalms of the series, the ideal speaker is Israel or Judah, considered as the Church or chosen people. This first verse, although general in its terms, is perfectly appropriate to the captivity, as the *distress* out of which the sufferer cried to God, and to the Restoration, as the *answer* to his prayer. A.—The Psalm aptly portrays the condition of the restored exiles, e.g., Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, prosecuting the great work of rebuilding the temple and city ; harassed by malign and lying enemies who misrepresented and traduced them before the Persian court ; compelled them to desist from their enterprise, and caused them long and most vexatious delays and immense trouble. The feelings of those godly men are brought out in this Psalm. C.

1. Cried, answered. The verbs are in the past tense, but do not refer merely to a past occasion. Past experience and present are here combined. From the past he draws encouragement for the present. P.

2. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that half the miseries of human life spring from the reckless and malignant use of the tongue. And these wicked tongues generally wag fastest *behind a man’s back, and amid the excitements of social intercourse.* We judge these sins of the tongue all too lightly, until we ourselves are

injured by them. We are apt to smile when James' scathing description of the unruly, untamable member is read and enforced. Many a man, many a woman, thinks nothing of having spoken an untrue, unkind, or slanderous word, and is politely amused at you if you lay much stress upon it. Yet, so soon as we consider, we see that it is from the bitter waters of this fountain that most of our miseries flow; that the world would be a changed world indeed if none but true and kind words were spoken in it. *Cox.*

3. *What will He give to thee, and what will He add to thee, thou tongue of fraud?* Having complained to God of the false tongue, the ideal speaker turns to it as actually present and addresses it directly, speaking of God in the third person. The meaning of the question is, what recompense can you expect from an infinitely righteous God for these malignant calumnies? *A.*—The phrase seems to mean, "What calamities shall He heap upon thee? How shall punishment upon punishment visit thee?" *P.*

4. Answers v. 3 with the twofold punishment, which Jehovah will cause the false tongue to feel. The tongue which shot piercing arrows is pierced by the sharpened arrows of an irresistibly strong One; the tongue which set its neighbor in a fever of anguish must endure a lasting heat of broom-coals which consumes it surely and torturingly. *D.*—The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to *coals of juniper*, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning. He shall feel sharp arrows and sharper fires. The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God; the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. *S.*

The verse gives a poetic expression to that sacred law of retribution which pervades the Scriptures: Men are to receive according to their deeds. Those whose lying lips shoot out

arrows of calumny shall be shot through with arrows; those whose guileful tongue kindles a blackening fire on their neighbors shall themselves be consumed as with fire. It is the old law—old, but never out of date—that as men do, so it shall be done unto them again; that as they sow, so shall they also reap. *Cox.*

5. It is evident from v. 6 that *Meshech* and *Kedar* are mere types and representatives of those who hate peace and delight in war. Compare Ezek. 38:2, where Meshech appears as a chief leader under Gog, the great prophetic representative of heathendom. *A.*

6, 7. A longing for peace breathes through these verses of the Psalm, and infuses a catholic meaning into it, making it a song not for a day, but for all time. Think what man's common life is like; how full of fret and care and strife; what a babble of conflicting voices from within and from without are forever falling on his ear! In the market, what rivalries and emulations and contentions! In politics, what differences of thought and opinion, what contradictory claims, what bitter enmities! In the home even, what selfishness and equivocation, what care and sorrow, what disappointment of reasonable hopes, what an impossibility of accurately or fully expressing one's self even to the heart that is nearest and kindest! Is it any marvel that a Hebrew, with a deep spiritual longing for peace, should cry as he started for the Temple, "Let me get out of all *that*, at least for a time. Let me be quit of this fever and strain, free from the vain turbulence and conflicting noises of the world. Let me rest and recreate myself awhile in the sacred asylum and sanctuary of the God of peace. God of peace, grant me Thy peace as I worship in Thy presence; and let me find a bettered world when I come back to it, or, at least, bring a bettered and more patient heart to its duties and strifes." *Cox.*

PSALM CXXI.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

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| <p>1 I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the mountains :
From whence shall my help come ?</p> <p>2 My help <i>cometh</i> from the LORD,
Which made heaven and earth.</p> <p>3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved :
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.</p> <p>4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.</p> | <p>5 The LORD is thy keeper :
The LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.</p> <p>6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.</p> <p>7 The LORD shall keep thee from all evil ;
He shall keep thy soul.</p> <p>8 The LORD shall keep thy going out and thy
coming in,
From this time forth and for evermore.</p> |
|---|--|

Jehovah Thy Keeper.

THIS song is a charming expression of confidence in the unfailling protection of God. As intended for use by the company of pilgrims, the first two verses may have been sung by one band of singers, and the remainder by another in response. It would be appropriate for morning or evening worship when they were approaching the mountains of Jerusalem. *De Witt.*

This beautiful Psalm is the trustful expression of a heart rejoicing in its own safety, under the watchful eye of Him who is both the Maker of heaven and earth and the Keeper of Israel. The Creator of the universe, the Keeper of the nation is also the Keeper of the individual. The one ever-recurring thought, the one characteristic word of the Psalm, is this word *keep*. Six times it is repeated in the last five verses of this one short ode. The use of the same word in the original is evidently designed to mark by this emphasis of iteration the truth of God's loving care for the individual, and so to banish all shadow of doubt, fear, and anxiety. P.

The idea is a very probable one, that the Psalm was the evening song of the sacred pilgrim band, sung on retiring to rest upon the last evening, when the long-wished-for termination of their wandering, the mountains of Jerusalem, had come into view in the distance. In this we obtain a suitable connection with the following Psalm, which would be sung *one station* further on when the pilgrims were at the gates of Jerusalem. *Hengs.*—At evening, as they are about to make preparations for their last night's encampment, they behold in the

far distance, clear against the dying light of the western sky, the holy hill with its crown of towers. The sight fills them with a sense of peace and security, and from the midst of the band a voice begins ; " I will lift up mine eyes to the mountains," etc. And another voice answers, " May He not suffer thy foot to be moved. May He that keepeth thee slumber not." And anon the whole company of pilgrims take up the strain : " Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep ; Jehovah shall keep thee," etc. To-morrow, in the words of the next Psalm, they will sing, " Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem." P.

So soon as we read it, it commends itself to us by its tender, tranquil beauty. It is the song of a heart *urging and persuading itself* to a calm, unwavering trust in the sleepless providence of God. The Keeper of the whole nation is the *Keeper* of the individual man. The Keeper of the man and the nation does not fall into slumber from weariness ; nor is His life, through mortal weakness, an alternate waking and sleeping. He guards them from the perils of the night as well as from the perils of the day. He *keeps* those who trust in Him from evil in every form. He *keeps* their very soul—their most inward and secret life. He *keeps* them in all the changes and intercourses of their outward life, their goings out and their comings in. He *keeps* them through all lapse of time, now and forevermore. By the iteration of one word, by the varied repetition of one thought, by the tenacious insistence on one point, the poet assures himself of the unceasing and watchful care of God, persuades himself to trust in it, banishes every shade of doubt

from his heart, and loses all fear, lest he should be overlooked and forgotten by the God who has all men and all worlds on His hands. *Cox.*

It has been said Mr. Romaine read this Psalm every day; and sure it is that every word in it is calculated to encourage and strengthen our faith and hope in God. *S. E. Pierce.*—It is a token of the inspiration of the Psalms, that, however they may have been prompted by the circumstances of the writers, they come home to our personal experiences, and utter our thoughts and feelings as if coined out of the conflicts and the desires, the sorrows and the hopes, of our own hearts. *J. P. T.*

1. The whole Psalm is a description of Jehovah as the guardian or protector of His people. The phrase to lift the eyes, though sometimes used to signify the mere act of directing them to an object, has its strict and full sense, when a higher object is particularly mentioned, such as hills or heavens. The mountains here meant are the heights on which Jerusalem is built. *A.*

To the mind of the Jewish poet the everlasting hills of his native land were as shadows of the Infinite. The security which these mountain ranges afforded to Palestine, forming as they did so remarkable a barrier to the land on every side except toward the sea, suggested to the writer of the Psalm an emblem of the Divine protection. *G. Forbes.*—There is an affinity between souls and hills, especially for those who have become acquainted with their own solemn depths and sublime heights. In man's earthly estate wonderful heights are laid low. He has descended from the eternal hills. Being away from his home and half a stranger to himself, the broken conformations of the outward world, the deep, dark, mist-shrouded valleys, the bold, aspiring, light-seeking mountains, deeply affect him. Man in trouble instinctively looks to the hills; he feels the attraction of the Fatherland, and knows there is help for him there. From the hill of the Lord we receive help in the valley. *W. Pulsford.*

It is looking upward to a Power above us which works the largest effects in both animating and purifying the soul, rather than any introspection, peeping about forever among our own petty attainments or defects. There is some secret provision in our nature which makes this act of *looking upward* the grandest exercise of our faculties. It is shadowed forth by the fact, that, in the common consent of all languages, what is noblest and best is placed over us. Heaven is arched above our heads. Excellence is a height. When we improve, we

ascend. Greatness is figured as an elevation. Virtues in character are measured according to their loftiness. The divinest motions of the human spirit are aspiration and veneration—both looking upward. Prayer, we say, goes up. The more a man sees above him to reverence, the humbler he is; and “he that humbleth himself is in due time exalted.” The finest symbols of all generous attainment are mountains and the sky. And just as to a true and thoughtful mind the largest satisfaction found in the society of great hills is in looking up toward them from beneath, and letting the kindled and devout imagination travel up their glorious peaks into the infinitude and mystery whither the summits point, rather than in putting the foot on their crown and sending the eye arrogantly down into the conquered plains, so always, if our spiritual state is right, what is grandest on earth most impels us to look beyond it. *F. D. H.*

The supreme need of the soul is Divine illumination and guidance. The soul of man is to be lifted to its grandest height of spiritual outlook, and strengthened for its loftiest task by keeping the eyes fastened on Him whose throne is in the heavens. *S. A. Harlow.*—Nothing does so establish the mind amid the railings and turbulence of present things as both a look above them and a look beyond them—above them, to the steady and good hand by which they are ruled; and beyond them, to the sweet and beautiful end to which by that hand they will be brought. *Jeremy Taylor.*—Whosoever learns this first great lesson, to look away from himself and forget himself, to look to another and know that his help comes to him from without, to look to Christ adoringly, trustingly—and there is nothing so radically opposite to selfishness as this—whosoever can do this, and has done this, finds peace. The eye fills with light only by looking away from itself to the sunlight that is perpetually flooding the heavens. *W. I. Budington.*

2. He looks up to the holy mountains when he inquires longingly, Whence will my help come? And to this question of longing he answers himself, that his help comes from nowhere else than from Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, from Him that is enthroned behind and upon these mountains, whose saving might reaches even to the remotest distances and corners of His creation, and with whom is help, *i.e.*, both the willingness and the power to help, so that accordingly help comes from no other quarter than from Him alone. *D.*

“I will lift up mine eyes. Whence shall help

come to me?" The question, observe, is not how he shall make his way to the help; how he shall get up to the mountains; the help is to come down from the mountains, "My help cometh from the Lord." We do not have first to lift ourselves to God; God comes down to us; and whatever lifting there is to be done, He does. We do not have to climb to our refuge; He compasses our path and our lying down; fortifies the places where we walk and where we rest. We do not have to march to our reserves; when we are hard beset they pour down from the hills of God and range themselves around and beside us, as Elisha saw them from the house-top in Dothan. God Himself comes down into the sphere of our weakness, imperfection, ignorance, spiritual obtuseness, and from that low level commences the work of lifting, enlightening, and developing us. What we want is to have our eyes open so that we may see Him *here* and *now*, available to us *as we are*. V.

Maker of heaven and earth; a name of God occurring especially in these pilgrim odes, and other later Psalms. God's creative power and majesty were, especially during the exile, impressed upon the heart of the nation. in contrast with the vanity of the gods of the heathen. P.

Nothing less than God's help can really meet his needs. He will not peer into the valleys, he will not turn to fellow-men, to nature, to work, to pleasure, as if they had the relief he needed. "My help cometh from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth." It is the duty of every man to seek help from the Highest in every department of his life. P. Brooks.

There is absolutely no support for tired human spirits but in the idea of God and that which that idea implies. To the mountain of Sinai you must look for the quickening of conscience; to the mountain of Calvary for salvation from sin. As the mountains lift themselves above the world in a "stillness of perpetual benediction," so God rises to our faith and hope above these storm-driven plains of time. His Fatherhood overhangs us like a perpetual benediction. He helps us with a help that is quite sufficient, and that sustains us amid all circumstances; yea, with a help that makes us indifferent to circumstance. To men accustomed only to the light of reason and calculation it is difficult to present the spiritual help of the Lord. It cannot be explained. But it is the one profound fact that makes the difference between the submissive and meek-browed; yea, the rejoicing saint, and the com-

plaining and rebellious sinner. The child of God who perhaps has nothing but poverty and pain, misery and misfortune, as the world reckons, somehow holds a boundless peace, and the martyr who smiles in his agonies is not a more conspicuous example of this strange unseen help of God than is the quiet, patient soul who, in ordinary ways of uneventful living, holds a steadfast faith and a happy hope in God. Oh, to be thus acquainted with God! To find His shadow every day on our road! To get His greeting with the morning light and His benediction when the evening falls, to live with Him, to have His shadow when life's evening comes as the good night of time, the good morning of eternity! C. L. Thompson.

3, 4. A great practical difficulty is to find a "keeper" who will remain *awake during the whole night*. The weariness of those who keep a faithful watch, and their longing for day during the tedious lonely hours of darkness, is alluded to in a graphic and beautiful figure of the Psalmist—

"My soul waiteth for the Lord
More than keepers for the morning,
More than keepers for the morning."

The usual method adopted to secure due vigilance is to require the man to call out loudly or to blow a whistle every quarter of an hour. Yet, notwithstanding all precautions, as soon as sleep falls on the tired camp, it is too often the case that the hireling keeper lies down on the ground, wraps around him his thick *abaiyeh*, or cloak, and careless of his charge, or overcome with weariness, yields himself up to his drowsy propensities. Viewed in the light of these facts, how full of condescension and cheer is the assurance of God's never-ceasing care—

"He who keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, He who keepeth Israel
Doth not slumber or sleep."

J. Neil.

4. Having reasoned that the God of *nature* will care for him, he now reasons that the God of *nations* will care for him. "He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." The Hebrew's range of history was indeed limited to the history of his own people, but the study of that record had resulted in rooting deeply in the Hebrew mind the conception of God in history. All his education had emphasized one thought, that God had chosen his race and had taken it under His especial pro-

tection. He had been taught to associate God directly and intimately with all the heroes of his nation, and with all the incidents of its history. The more clearly he saw God working for his race, the more clearly he saw God working for *him*. The grandeur of God's dealings with the people as a whole, the occasions on which He handled them as one man, did not at all interfere with his sense of God's hand upon him *individually*. The fact that God watched over Israel as a nation was to him the best reason for believing that He watched over him. The God whose unslumbering eye had watched the destinies of Israel through all the changing years was the very One whom the pilgrim could most trust to preserve his life from all evil. And the Hebrew not only won comfort, but he drew it legitimately. All the past of all men is yours and mine for the reason that God is in it; and whatever lessons of His power or mercy or forbearance, of His goodness and love, of His favor and vengeance it contains, we may take and He means us to take for our own individual assurance or instruction or warning. V.

The "Maker of heaven and earth" is also the "Keeper of Israel." It is *His* hand which has conducted the chosen people through all the vicissitudes of their strange, eventful history, through the perils of the darkness, through the perils of the light. Must not He, who keeps the whole nation, also keep every member of the nation? On this conception, on this conviction, the poet now plants himself. Standing in this new position, he asks, "Will the Keeper of Israel suffer *my* foot to totter? will He slumber in His watch over *me*?" and rejects the supposition with profound emotion. This is the special force of the Hebrew of v. 3, a force which we can only tamely render by representing the Psalmist as assuring himself, "He, *verily*, will not suffer thy foot to swerve, thy Keeper will not slumber," for *thy* Keeper is the Keeper of Israel, and the whole history of Israel is a demonstration that He has never slumbered nor slept, never intermitted His providential care. *Cox*.

Fancy that to-night you were lifted above this great city, with its millions of inhabitants—the roof taken from every abode—before your inspection lies open every act of every being at every moment, all which you must see. Every word reaches your ear, and you must listen to all; every form of sorrow, every cry of agony. Not only visible acts, but every secret plan of purity or vice, of virtue or wickedness, every scheme of benevolence, and every purpose of

riot, theft, licentiousness, robbery, and murder; every pang of the agonizing wife, mother, or child; the anxieties of the rich, and the distresses of the poor. Multiply these by a thousand—for a thousand millions of such beings people our earth. Hold in your memory—nay, ever-present before you—all the acts of these millions in the moments past, while the present moment unfolds its vastness, and add to that a foreknowledge of the interminable future. Under such a pressure every nervous system must be prostrate, every brain must reel. God alone knows, sees, understands all; and He is never weary, He never slumbereth or sleepeth. *M. Simpson*.

5. The Lord is thy keeper. Two principal points are asserted in these words. Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, the omnipotent and self-existent God, is the Keeper and Preserver of His people. The people of God are kept, at all times and in all circumstances, by His mighty power unto everlasting salvation; they are preserved even "forevermore." *A. Serle*.

Keeper. Shade. The titles of God are virtually promises, as when He is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding-place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, the truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises. *Clarkson*.

The whole movement of Scripture doctrine, of its history and imagery is from God downward to man; and the incarnation, which gathers up all Scripture into itself, which is the key to all its history and to all its symbolism, is expressly a movement out of the very heart of God, down to sick, suffering, erring, sin-stained man. The life, the words, the death of Jesus Christ, are simply God's way of saying to man, "All things are yours;" and so the Hebrew pilgrim was on the right track when he combined creative power and providential care in one and the same Being; when he recognized in the God of the mountains, the Father "full of grace and truth," and saw nothing inconsistent in God's creating and ordering the heavenly host, and in God's making Himself a shadow in the heat for a weary man in the desert; in God's keeping watch and ward round the circuit of the heavens, and in God's acting as sentinel of a pilgrim's tent in the wilderness. V.

5, 6. "The Lord thy shade," throwing over

thee the grateful shelter which thou mayest need. This shade will avert the sun stroke in the heats of day, and whatever malarious or otherwise harmful influences may imperil you by night. There is no occasion to assume that the Scriptures endorse the notion of noxious influence from the moon itself. Night, with or without moon, brings more or less that is noxious. C.

The inward voice gives him the distinct assurance, "*Jehovah is thy Keeper—thy Keeper, and not only the Maker of heaven and earth; thy Keeper, and not only the Keeper of Israel. He cares for thee, and watches over thee.* When you are on the march, He will be to thee as a shadow from the heat, and a screen from the dazzling radiance that perturbs the senses, '*the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*' In all changes of season and time He will be thy guard, adapting His help to thy varying needs." Cox.

7. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. It is an absolute promise, there are no conditions annexed; it honors God for us simply to believe it, and rest on the Lord for the performance of it. As we view it, what have we to fear? The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, His Word is immutable. Jesus is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul. S. E. Pierce.—The threefold expression, "shall keep thee . . . thy soul . . . thy going out and thy coming in," marks the completeness of the protection vouchsafed, extending to all that the man is and that he does. P.

8. Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in, from now even to eternity. This is the third repetition of the phrase, *Jehovah will keep*, i.e., keep safe, protect, preserve, as if to silence the misgivings of a weak or tempted faith, by the reiterated declaration of this cheering truth. *Going out and coming in* is a proverbial Hebrew phrase for all the occupations and affairs of life. The original reference is to man's going out to labor in the morning and returning home to rest at night. A.—A promise that we shall be kept in all our ways; that in all our business, in all our movements, amid all the changes and chances of our mortal life, we shall evermore be defended by that ready help which issues from an eye that cannot close and an arm that cannot fail. "Even forevermore." There is a "going out" from this world; there is a "coming in" to the next world. Our "going out" through the dark valley shall be under the guidance of that blessed Shepherd whose rod and whose staff shall never fail to comfort the believer; our "coming in"

to the heavenly city shall be as heirs with that glorious Redeemer who must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. Melvill.

God's presence is enough for toil and enough for rest. If He journey with us by the way, He will abide with us when nightfall comes; and His companionship will be sufficient for direction on the road, and for solace and safety in the evening camp. Maclaren.—Thou shalt be under His protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward bound or homeward bound, as He kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest, and thy coming in when thou diest; going out to thy labor in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in (104: 23). H.

How large a writ or patent of protection is granted here! No times shall be hurtful, neither "*day nor night*," which includes all times. Nothing shall hurt, neither *sun nor moon*, nor heat nor cold. These should include all annoyances. Nothing shall hurt. "*Thy soul shall be preserved, thy outgoing and thy coming in shall be preserved.*" These include the whole person of man, and him in all his just affairs and actions. Nothing of man is safe without a guard, and nothing of man can be unsafe which is thus guarded. They should be kept who can say, "The Lord is our keeper;" and they cannot be kept, no, not by legions of angels, who have not the Lord for their keeper. None can keep us but He, and He hath promised to keep us "*forevermore.*" Caryl.—There is something very striking in the assurance that the Lord will not suffer the foot even of the most faint and wearied one to be moved. The everlasting mountains stand fast, and we feel as if, like Mount Zion, they could not be removed forever; but the step of man—how feeble in itself, how liable to stumble or trip even against a pebble in the way! Yet that foot is as firm and immovable in God's protection as the hills themselves. In the hours of occupation and hurry, in the conflicts and perils of the day, in the helplessness of sleep, in the glare and heat of the noon-day, amid the damps and dews of night, that unslumbering eye is still over every child for his good. Man, indeed, goeth forth to his work and to his labor till the evening; but alike as he goes forth in the morning, and as he returns in the evening, the Lord still holds him up in all his goings

forth and his comings in ; no manner of evil shall befall him. And oh ! what a sweet addition is it to the promise, "He shall keep *thy soul*." From the very dawn of life to its latest close, even forevermore, "He will keep thee from all evil ; He will keep *thy soul*." *Bouchier*.

The Psalmist has celebrated God's watchful providence over us in our journeyings, as defending us from the sun by day and the moon by night, as preserving us from all evil, and keeping our very feet from harm. Paul ascribed "a prosperous journey" to "the will of God ;" and James has instructed us, when we have a journey in view, to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." In these days of frequent and hurried journeying, there is less time for religious preparation, and often there is little thought of it. Yet, when we consider that the very facility and frequency of travel have multiplied both its pleasures and its perils, we surely shall bethink ourselves to commend to God those who are journeying by land or sea ; and, in going from home, will commit ourselves to Him who is present everywhere and at every moment, and who doth neither slumber nor sleep. J. P. T.

As we gather up the lessons of the Psalm, we find a suggestion of our own helplessness in the words which assure us of Divine protection ; we have the positive assurance of that protection based upon God's power in creation, and God's wisdom and love as shown in the past experience of His people. We are made to see that as our chief danger is spiritual, so our need of protection is constant, and that none but a Divine Protector can insure our safety ; and that, in order to avail ourselves of this eternal safeguard, we must live within its compass, and not think that we can pass our time at our own pleasure, and in the place of our own choosing, and then claim God's protection when emergencies arise. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty, he only can say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress." "Because thou hast made the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." Thus all the pledges and assurances of the Psalm grow up in the sphere of life in God. It is a close walk with God, a life hidden in Him, which alone can interpret the sweetness of these pledges and make them fully available. V.

PSALM CXXII.

A SONG OF ASCENTS ; OF DAVID.

1 I WAS glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of the LORD.
2 Our feet are standing
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem ;
■ Jerusalem, that art builded
As a city that is compact together :
4 Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of
the LORD,
For a testimony unto Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
5 For there are set thrones for judgment,

The thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem :
They shall prosper that love thee.
7 Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.
9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our
God
I will seek thy good.

THIS Psalm, full of the sweet inspirations of love for the house of the Lord and for the scenes of worship there, is one of the "songs of the

ascents," every thought and sentiment in it being adapted to the case of Hebrew families joyfully setting forth on their stated pilgrimage

to the holy city to join in the prescribed worship of stated festivals. C.

This Psalm, more emphatically than any in the Songs of Ascents, merits the title of a pilgrim song. It was evidently composed with immediate reference to one of the three yearly festivals, when the caravans of pilgrims "went up" to the holy city. The poet tells us how his heart had filled with joy as his friends and neighbors had invited him to go with them "to the house of Jehovah." The next verse transports us at once within the gates of Jerusalem. They have reached their journey's end; they are in the city which they love. Then the poet tells us, first, the impression made upon his mind by her stateliness and her beauty, and next, how there come crowding upon his memory the scenes of her earlier grandeur, the thought of all she had been as the gathering-place of the tribes of Jehovah, the royal seat of David and of his house. Filled with these thoughts, inspired by these memories, he bursts forth into hearty, fervent prayer—the prayer of one who loved his country as he loved his God, with no common devotion—for the welfare of that city so glorious in her past history, and with which all hopes for the future were so intimately bound up. And so the beautiful ode closes. P.

We have heard the Hebrew pilgrims bid farewell to their homes as they started for Jerusalem, with a sigh for peace, a prayer for Divine protection. We have heard them sing their evening hymn, what time the caravan halted for the night, as they looked toward the Mount of Succor and Benediction, and rejoiced in the Lord their Keeper. And, now, we rejoin them as they arrive in the Holy City, and, with the perils of the journey behind them, rejoice in the stately beauty of Jerusalem, in its pathetic memories, and in the sanctuary which is its crown and pride. No other Psalm in the pilgrims' Psalter is so emphatically a pilgrim song as this. It was obviously *written for the occasion*, and not merely adapted to it; its author intended it to be sung as the caravans passed through the streets of Jerusalem on their way to the Temple. It was admirably suited to the purpose. It gathers into itself whatever could deepen and prolong the joy of the moment from the personal experience of the pilgrims, from their patriotic traditions, from their prophetic hopes. Cox.

1. Here is an example of the spirit in which we ought to approach the public worship of God; in a spirit of holy gladness. *Rawnsley.*

2. *Standing are our feet in Thy gates, O Jerusalem!* The common version (*shall stand*)

is entirely ungrammatical. The past tense of the substantive verb with the participle means strictly *have been standing, i.e., have begun to stand, or are already standing.* A.—Our feet are standing. The lively expression of the satisfaction and delight of one who finds himself on this high day of festal joy within the sacred walls, mingling with the throng of worshippers who crowd the courts of the temple, and taking his part, with a full sense of his privileges as an Israelite, in the solemn services of the feast. P.

3. When he and the other visitors to the feast had reached the goal of their pilgrimage, and their feet stood still in the gates, as if charmed by the overpowering, glorious sight, he exclaims: Jerusalem, O thou that art built up again. Jerusalem has risen again out of its ruined and dismembered condition, the breaches and gaps are done away with, it stands there as a city in which house joins on to house. D.

4, 5. Glances at the earlier times, when Jerusalem had been the great religious and political centre of the nation, the dwelling-place of Jehovah, to whose temple all the tribes were gathered at the three great feasts, and the seat of government of kings of the house of David. This had been its double glory. P.—Jerusalem is very fair to him in its present beauty, and it is pleasant to him to keep the feast for its own sake. But both feast and city grow more fair and pleasant and attractive as he remembers that, from of old, "the tribes, the tribes of Jah," came up to the city in which he now stands, and kept the feast which he now attends. And in the main current of his song he runs back to David, and dwells on the fact that here, in this city, "thrones" had long been "set for the house of David," *i.e.,* for David and his descendants, David and his dynasty. Cox.

5. **Thrones for judgment.** On a throne of ivory, brought from Africa or India, the throne of many an Arabian legend, the kings of Judah were solemnly seated on the day of their accession. From its lofty seat, and under that high gateway, Solomon and his successors after him delivered their solemn judgments. That "porch" or "gate of justice" still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate; exactly as the Gate of Justice still recalls it to us at Granada, and the Sublime Porte ("the Lofty Gate") at Constantinople. *Stanley.*

Jerusalem, the city of the one national sanctuary, was at the same time the city of the Davidic kingship. The phrase "thrones of judgment" is transferred here from the judicial persons

who sit in judgment, to the seats which are set down and stand there for judgment. In the golden age of the Davidic kingship the palace was also the supreme court of justice in the land; the king was the chief judge, and the sons, brothers, or kinsmen of the king were his assessors and councillors. In the time of the poet it is different; but the attractiveness of Jerusalem, not only as the city of Jehovah, but also as the city of David, remains for all times. D.

The house of David. The expression plainly points to successors of David, not to members of his family associated with himself in government, administration of justice, etc.

6-9. The last four verses of the Psalm breathe a spirit of the noblest, most unselfish patriotism. Not for his own sake, but for the sake of his brethren—the people at large—and for the sake of his God, His temple, and His service, he wishes peace to Jerusalem, and calls upon others to wish her peace. With love to Israel and love to Jehovah there is naturally united a warm affection for Jerusalem, a hearty interest in her welfare. P.

The Psalmist is a man of God as well as a man of Israel. The temple is even dearer to him than the city. He is moved by religious as well as by patriotic emotion. The fate of Israel is bound up with that of the palace of the Great King. And so, looking rather to the future than to the past, he breaks out into a profusion of good wishes for Jerusalem, and for all who love her, not for her own sake simply, but mainly “for the sake of the house of the Lord.” One and the same good wish is cast into many varied forms, denoting the fervor of the spirit from which they proceed. He calls on all men to pray for the peace of the City of Peace. He wishes prosperity to all who love her. For himself he wishes and prays, “Peace be within thy walls, prosperity within thy palaces.” And he says on behalf of his brethren and friends, “Peace to thee,” *saluting* the city as though it were a person. He vows that, because the House of God stands in the midst of her, he will never cease to seek the good of the city. In all this variety of form—in adjuration and prayer, in salutation and vow—it is the fervor of the devout patriot that speaks. He holds the sanctuary to be the centre and stay of the national life. He holds that all Israel should exist for Jerusalem, and all Jerusalem for the temple, since the temple is the house and palace of the Most High. Cox.

A concern for the peace and happiness of our country is not only a political, but a religious

virtue; a care that becomes us both as we are men, and as we are Christians; which stands not upon the narrow bottom of self-interest, but rises from a more generous principle, partaking of the love of God and love of our neighbor; since, while we seek the public peace, we show our beneficence to the one, and our obedience to the other. *Bishop Sherlock.*

6. “The peace of Jerusalem” is proposed as an object for prayer. “Peace” is here used to denote prosperity, all that is good. The Psalmist thus explains it in the succeeding verse: “Peace be within thy walls, prosperity within thy palaces.” The word, taken in this large acceptation, was customary among the Israelites; they wished “peace” to each other in the sense of “all good things.” *R. Hall.*

The Psalm teaches us not simply what the Hebrew pilgrims felt, but also what God would have us feel. He would have us glad when we are summoned to His house. He would have us deepen our gladness by recalling the glorious company, the goodly fellowship, with which we associate ourselves so often as we come and stand before Him. He would have us pray for the peace and prosperity of His Church, and seek its good. He assures us that we shall prosper as we labor for its prosperity, that we shall enter into peace as we seek its peace. Cox.

The prosperity of the Church consists in the piety of its members. Their numbers, without this, are as nothing. A church without piety is a synagogue of Satan, a sect and school of pestilence. The measure of piety in a church is the measure of prosperity. Without this, however rich, it is poor; however outwardly flourishing, inwardly wretched. Where the love of God, the faith of Jesus Christ, the fruits of the Spirit abound, there the Church is in a state of prosperity, however afflicted in outward circumstances. As members of the Church, we profess to make ourselves over to the Father, Son, and Spirit; if we keep back our hearts from God, if we transfer our affections to the world, we are not true members of the Church; our profession is false and hollow. Another feature of church prosperity is the prevalence of brotherly love; the spirit of union among the members. This is the mind of Christ, and He prescribes it as His own new commandment, as the distinguishing characteristic of His true disciples. How lovely a spectacle does that church present in which brotherly love prevails! no jarring passions, no envious competitions; but a delightful retirement from the troubles of the world. It is when Christians preserve “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” that

the prosperity of the Church of Christ peculiarly appears. Conscientious and diligent attendance on all the ordinances of religion, public and domestic, is a third requisite to the prosperity of a Christian society. Neglect of these is contagious among the members, and fatal to the well-being of a church. All should conspire to strengthen the hands of their ministers and their brethren by an attentive observance of the appointed means of grace. To this must be added, as a fourth point, the due exercise of church discipline. The spiritual power with which Christ has armed His Church is a high and mysterious power, which has no parallel on earth. The sentence of excommunication, in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible ; it is the voice of God, speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises ranks with heathen men, joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition. Excommunication is a sword which, strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more efficacious for being divested of all sensible and exterior envelopments, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, until it be healed by the blood of atonement, applied by penitence and prayer. *R. Hall.*

If a man loves God he will take his part with God, just as a citizen who loves his country will take the part of his country. He will draw himself to all God's friends and count them brothers, rejoicing with them in the fellowship of the common love. He will set himself in every manner to strengthen, comfort, edify, stimulate them in their fidelity and application to good works. All this he will do by the simple instinct of his love to God. If there were no such thing enjoined upon the disciples of Christ as a formal profession, or church organization, there would yet be generated, within six months, exactly the same thing. The disciples would come out of the world in a body, testifying what God has done for them in the quickening grace of Christ shed abroad in their hearts, and claiming their fellowship with each other. They would band themselves together in holy covenant before God, to co-operate in a form of spiritual order—a church. They would have their officers and leaders. They would watch for each other. They would have terms adjusted by which to separate themselves from hypocrites and impostors—all that we now have in our formal politics and church compacts. Co-operation is the strength of such as have a

common cause, and organization is the certain requisite of this. *H. B.*

This work of Christ's house is varied to different individuals. "The Son of Man gave to every one;" that is, to each one, his work. Some are there to teach, some to counsel and administer ; some to tend the young ; some to visit the sick-bed ; some to conduct the temporal affairs of the Church ; some to be liberal givers as God has prospered them, and some, without any formal mode of action, come under this description, which applies to them all : "Sons of God, without rebuke, shining as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life." It is very beautiful to see how the God who has bound His world into a grand harmony by its very diversity, has arranged for this same end in His Church, by giving the members their different faculties of work ; how the pure light that comes from the sun breaks into its separate hues when it touches the palace-house of Christ, with its varied cornices and turrets, till every color lies in tranquil beauty beside its fellow. If it is not so it should be so ; and as the Church grows it will be so. Use and ornament, the corner-stone and the cope-stone, shall both be felt to have their due place. To see how this may be, is to perceive that an end can be put to all jealousies and heart-burnings, and may help us even now to take our position calmly and unenviously, working in our department, assured that our labor shall be found to contribute to the full proportion of the whole. *Ker.*

Righteous men, lovers and doers of the truth, are as the lightning conductors, drawing aside the fiery bolts of His vengeance, which would else have long since scorched, shattered, and consumed a guilty world. Oftentimes, it may be, they are little accounted of among men, being indeed the hidden ones of God crying in their secret places for the things which are done against the words of God's lips. The world may pass them, may know nothing of them, yet it is for their sakes that the world is endured and continues unto this day. And this reminds us of the duty of prayer and intercession for others. Prayer for others is never lost, is never in vain ; often by it we may draw down blessing upon others, but always and without fail it will return in blessing on ourselves. *Trench.*

In praying for the salvation of a single soul, we pray for more than the whole world and its glories, more than the empire of the world, more than all possible inanimate creations. For we pray for one on whom the good pleasure of the Holy Trinity rests ; for one whom the Father wills to be saved, for whom the Son was in-

carnate, with whom the Holy Ghost has pleaded and will plead. Oh, for heart of fire, for fiery zeal for souls, that if we can do no more, we may yet plead with God with burning thoughts, burning longings, burning desires, for God's glory in the salvation of souls! *Pusey.*

The true and grand idea of a church is a society for the purpose of making men like Christ, earth like heaven; the kingdoms of the world the Kingdom of Christ. *Arnold.*

There is no other cause, compact, institution now on foot in the world which is at all comparable for benefit and dignity with the Church of God. It has outlived the great empires, three or four tiers of them in succession. It has created new empires, such as this of ours. It has leavened all human society with elements of advancement, by which educations, laws, liberties, sciences, inventions, constitutions, have been coming all the while into flower. It would take whole hours just to give the shining roll of names that in worth and genius, and true sainthood, have been marching out into their great history in it, for these almost nineteen hundred years. The history, I grant, is in some sense an awful history. The woes are sharp, the fires are hot, the prisons are bursting with wail; women-martyrs, child-martyrs, the general bleeding host of persecuted merit move on, as it were, in procession to die. From age to age it has been rock, as the Saviour promised, to the wrath surging heavily against it; rock, also, which is yet more strange, to the horrible rage of cruelty and crime within. Unable to be shaken by either this or that, it still stands firm

as no political state or kingdom could have stood, even for a generation; till now we see it emerging, as we think, in the grace alone of the cross; in that to be full-organized, society complete, everlasting, universal, inviolable brotherhood. The Church is everlasting, the only fabric, structure, institute, society, or state that is. And how grand a thing it is that, going in hither, we can build ourselves into the eternal. Against all else a statute runs of limitation. Getting wealth we get no charter for breathing. Getting fame we shall not be on hand to hear the ring of it. Going into the healing of bodies we can only patch them up for an hour. Going into the law we give ourselves to what was made last year, and will be unmade the next. Public honors vanish, and statesmanship and states are only for a time, and commonly a very short time. Not so the Church of God, the great, everlasting all-worlds' society; that remains, and if we put much cost and sacrifice into it, all the better. H. B.

With all our divisions the Christian Jerusalem is compact in itself together. What occupies the hearts and tongues of the myriads of worshippers that assemble themselves weekly in the sanctuaries of our beloved land, and of the millions that assemble beyond the Atlantic billows, but the one glorious Gospel of the grace of God? Yonder and yonder and yonder, whatever their name, their place, or their outward worship, are myriads of true hearts, beating with one pulse, gazing on one hope, possessed of one conviction, and praying and pressing forward to one blessed home. *Robert Nisbet.*

PSALM CXXIII.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

1 UNTO thee do I lift up mine eyes,
O thou that sittest in the heavens.
2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the
hand of their master,
As the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her
mistress;
So our eyes look unto the LORD our God,
Until he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy
upon us:
For we are exceedingly filled with con-
tempt.
4 Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorning of those that are at
ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.

ALSTED beautifully entitles this Psalm "The Eye of Hope." "This" says Luther, "is a

deep sigh of a pained heart, which looks round on all sides, and seeks friends, protectors, and

comforters, but can find none. Therefore it says, 'Where shall I, a poor despised man, find refuge? I am not able to preserve myself; wisdom and plans fail me among the multitude of adversaries who assault me; therefore I come to Thee, O my God, to Thee I lift my eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens.' He places over against each other the Inhabitant of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, and reminds himself that, though the world be high and powerful, God is higher still. What shouldst thou do, then, when the world despises and insults thee? Turn thine eyes thither, and see that God, with His beloved angels and His elect, looks down upon thee, rejoices in thee, and loves thee."

This Psalm is either the sigh of the exile, toward the close of the captivity looking in faith and patience for the deliverance which he had reason to hope was now at hand; or it is the sigh of those who, having already returned to their native land, were still exposed to "the scorn and contempt" of the Samaritans and others, who, favored by the Persian Government, took every opportunity of harassing and insulting the Jews. Compare Neh. 2:19, "They laughed us to scorn and despised us," with v. 4 of the Psalm, "The scorn of them that are at ease, the contempt of the proud." P. —It makes two main points: *How* we lift up our eyes unto the Great Lord above, and *why*; under what stress of trial—viz., the reproach and scorn which fills and oppresses our souls. The infant colony was feeble; their enemies strong, and as the history shows, very insulting. C.

The Psalm should be dear to us also for its own sake. It gives brief but impressive expression to all the gentler and nobler moods of the man who "suffers, and is strong"—to his sense of utter dependence on God, to his entire submission to the Divine will, to his eager and watchful obedience, to his patience while that will ordains that he shall only "stand and wait," to his unfaltering trust in the rectitude and goodness of that will, to his hope that it will yet take on forms of grace, to the charity which constrains him to include his fellows in his prayer for the succors of heavenly mercy. *Cox.*—This Psalm is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every

prayer is long enough if it be fervent and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints. *Luther.*

1, 2. The destinies of all men and more especially of the Church are in the hand of Him who sits enthroned in the unapproachable glory of heaven as the King who rules over all things and the Judge who decides all things. Up to Him the poet lifts his eyes, so also the Church; just as the eyes of servants are directed toward the hand of their lord, and the eyes of a maid toward the hand of her mistress; for this hand regulates the whole house, and they look for its becks and directions with most eager attention. The people of Israel are Jehovah's servants; the community of Israel is Jehovah's maid. In His hand lies its future. He will at length have pity upon His own. Therefore its longing gaze is turned toward Him, without wearying, until He graciously turn its distress. D.

2. "*As the eyes of slaves,*" watching anxiously the least movement, the smallest sign of their master's will. The image expresses complete and absolute dependence. Savary, "Letters on Egypt," says, "The slaves stand silent at the bottom of the rooms with their hands crossed over their breasts. *With their eyes fixed upon their master* they seek to anticipate every one of his wishes." In the Psalm the eye directed to the hand of God is the *oculus sperans*, the eye which waits, and hopes, and is patient, looking only to Him and none other for help. P.

The believer glories in the name and office of a servant of Christ, or in being as Paul called himself, the slave of the Lord Jesus; he knows that his Saviour is all-wise, and almighty, and merciful and good, and that if He will only take the ordering of our concerns, and of those of the Church and of the world into His own hands, it must be wisdom to leave them there, and to seek and implicitly to follow His orderings. The idea of there being anything slavish and demeaning in such service is unknown to the Christian, for he seeks to have every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. It will be felt by all that such a service both evidences and must foster high attainments in the Christian life. Under a skilled business man or a good housekeeper, attentive servants will be able to do the work of those that employ them, and to know their business and to gain their confidence so that it is felt to be safe to leave all in their hands, if need be. Such a servant is accounted invaluable, and will be greatly beloved. So is it in Christ's

service. We may be sure that one who is ever eyeing the Master will know much about Him, His glory, His purposes, His work and will, and will have many delightful evidences of His love and favor. The Queen of Sheba said to Solomon, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." A greater than Solomon is here. Unspeakingly precious is it to have attained to such service under the Master. *W. H. Lewis.*

3, 4. The Psalm is remarkable for the entire absence of anything like impatience in its language. From the expression of trustful dependence it passes to the earnest, heartfelt *Kyrie eleison* in which it pours out in few words the trouble whence springs the prayer. *P.*

We hear the prayer he has come to court to urge. How much he is in earnest we learn from the repetition, "*Be gracious unto us, be gracious unto us.*" How much he has suffered we learn from that other repetition, "*Long have we been filled with contempt, long has our soul been filled with the scorn of the insolent, the contempt of the proud.*" We feel, we cannot but feel that he and those whom he represents have been deeply wronged, that they have suffered long and much. We are struck, we cannot but be struck with the meekness they have displayed and still display. No word of impatience or resentment breaks from their spokesman's lips, no imprecation on his foes or theirs. He asks for justice, *as a grace*, to the wronged; he does *not* ask for vengeance on the wrong-doers. The people he represents know

not what to do, but their eyes are up unto the Lord their King. They are His. Their future lies in His hand. At last He will take compassion on His own. And they will wait, wait patiently, for Him, knowing that, though He tarry, He will come, and come to give them the desire of their heart.

Whoever was the author of the Psalm, and whatever the period at which it was written, the Hebrew pilgrims often found it much to their mind. There were many dark years in their history, years of disaster, defeat, subjection. From the time of the captivity they knew little rest. Invasion succeeded to invasion, war to war. They never continued in one stay. And in all the clouded years of these five centuries—when the Syrians, the Greeks, the Romans were in the land—they must have known what it was to be loaded and bowed down with "the scorn of the insolent." Again and again they must have taken refuge in the conviction that, though men might be against them, He who sat "enthroned in heaven," ruling over all races, determining all events, was at once their Judge and their Friend. Again and again they must have felt that they stood waiting on the Lord, like the slave whose eyes are fixed on his master's hand, like the suppliant who has appealed for redress. Again and again, therefore, no prayer would be more native to their lips than, "*Be gracious unto us, O Lord, be gracious unto us, for long have we been filled with contempt.*" *Cor.*

PSALM CXXIV.

A SONG OF ASCENTS; OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
Let Israel now say;</p> <p>2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
When men rose up against us:</p> <p>3 Then they had swallowed us up alive,
When their wrath was kindled against us:</p> <p>4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us,
The stream had gone over our soul:</p> | <p>5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul,</p> <p>6 Blessed be the LORD,
Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.</p> <p>7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:
The snare is broken, and we are escaped.</p> <p>8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.</p> |
|---|--|

In Psalms 123-125 we have three successive pictures, or rather three parts of one and the same picture; for they are not only linked together as representing successive scenes in one history, but they are also pervaded by one great master thought which lends its unity to the whole group. In each there is the same full recognition of Jehovah's grace and power as working both for the deliverance and the security of His people. In the one hundred and twenty-third Psalm, "The eye waits upon Jehovah, till He be gracious." In the one hundred and twenty-fourth, "If Jehovah had not been on our side, men had swallowed us up alive. . . . Our help is in the name of Jehovah." In the one hundred and twenty-fifth, "The mountains are about Jerusalem, and Jehovah is round about His people." There can be little doubt that this Psalm (the one hundred and twenty-fourth) records the feelings of the exiles when the proclamation of Cyrus at length permitted them to return to their native land. P.

The returned captives were few and poor and weak. They returned to a land wasted by fire and sword, choked with jungle, overrun with wild beasts, and to a city which had been reduced to a mere heap of ruins. The half-heathen inhabitants of Samaria plundered and derided them, and were only kept from flying at their throats by the Persian satraps. They had to watch against surprise while they built. The fields, which they had laboriously cleared and tilled, were often plundered by marauding bands as the harvest approached. Yet *these* men were the men who first sang this joyful and exultant Psalm! With what stout hearts must they have looked fortune and misfortune in the face! And if we ask the secret of their strength, the answer is plain and clear. It is simply this—trust in God. He had delivered them from the Babylonian snare; would He not sustain and guard them now that they had escaped? He had plucked them out of the dark, tempestuous sea in which they were sinking; would He not give them rest from their enemies round about, and establish the work of their hands upon them, now that they had returned to the city He loved, and were rebuilding the house in which He dwelt? Was it not reasonable to suppose that He had a purpose of mercy concerning them who had wrought so great a deliverance for them, and that He would carry it out? Cox.

1. If (*it had*) not (*been*) Jehovah who was for us—oh, let Israel say. This Psalm consists of two parts, an acknowledgment of God as the

deliverer of Israel (vs. 1-5), and a consequent determination to trust in Him exclusively for future favors (vs. 6-9). The verse before us propounds the theme of the whole composition in a more striking form. A.

Many a time may Israel say to this day, had not the Lord been on their side, their enemies would have overcome them. But the Lord was on their side, He turned their captivity, He delivered them from their persecutors, He caused the wrath of men to praise Him, and restrained the remainder of their wrath. He sometimes diverted the attention of their enemies by secular distractions; the Divine Being so interfered as to create a second interest favorable to His Church, and made monarchs, for their own advantage, protect that Church which they would otherwise persecute and oppress. All hearts are in His hands; He can say to the proudest waves of human wrath, Hither shall ye go, and no farther. He makes the worm Jacob to thresh the mountains. He allows His Church to be the only society which subsists from age to age without any alteration; it exhibits the same form, is maintained by the same principles, and speaks the same voice that issued from the infantile Church at the first period of her history. R. Hall.

Jehovah is on the side of His people in a spiritual sense. God the Father is on their side; His love and relation to them engage Him to be so; hence all those good things that are provided for them and bestowed on them. Christ is on their side; He is the surety for them, the Saviour of them; He is their King who protects and defends them here, their Advocate and interceding High-Priest who pleads their cause and obtains every blessing for them. The Spirit of Jehovah is on their side, to carry on His work in them; to assist them in their prayers and supplications; to secure them from temptations; and to comfort them in all their castings down. Were this not the case, what would become of them! Gill.

6, 7. Now that the fact of the Divine succor has been expressed, there follow the thanksgiving for it and the exultation of the rescued ones. In v. 6 the enemies are thought of as beasts of prey because of their lust for blood, just as the world-powers are in the Book of Daniel; in v. 7 they are thought of as fowls because of their craftiness. D.

6-8. Opening with a thanksgiving to heaven, this second strophe falls back on the image of the third verse. There the Psalmist had compared the Hebrews to a prey which the raven-

ing beast swallows up alive ; here he blesses Jehovah that they have not been "given as a prey to the teeth" of their enemies. Nay, he strikes out a new, yet closely related figure, over which he lingers, as, in the previous strophe, he had lingered on the image of the overwhelming waters—that of the bird and the broken snare. As he conceives of Israel escaping like a quarry from the fangs and claws of a beast of prey, a new similitude of unhopedor deliverance occurs to him, and he exultingly sings, "*Our soul hath escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowlers ; the snare was broken, and we—we escaped.*"

Indeed, the whole Psalm is alive with joy, the joy of an escape, of a triumph, as wonderful as it was unexpected. And yet it is no exultation in his own wit or might which fills the poet's heart. It is not in these that he glories, but in God ; for it is not by these that he has been delivered from the toils in which he was caught, from the waters in which he was drowning. Throughout the Psalm gives the glory to God alone. The first strophe opens with the confession, "If *Jehovah* had not been for us, and had not shown Himself strong in our behalf, we must have been swallowed up and overwhelmed." The second strophe opens with a thanksgiving to *Jehovah*, who has not given them as a prey to the teeth of their foes. And the whole Psalm closes and reaches its climax in the solemn ascription—

Our help is in the name of *Jehovah*,
The Maker of heaven and earth.

Cox.

S. The principle of spiritual life with ourselves is precisely that laid down as the principle of national life for the Israelites. God gives us the land of promise for no righteousness of our own. Everything depends on God's mercy, God's will, God's purpose ; the certainty of victory depends not upon any feelings, or experiences, or conflicts of ours, but upon the ever-present help of the almighty God. *Bishop Goodwin.*

Blessed be His name, He that has fashioned us will watch over us ; yea, He has done so, and rendered us help in the moment of jeopardy. He is our help and our shield, even He alone. He will to the end break every snare. He made heaven for us, and He will keep us for heaven ; He made the earth, and He will succor us upon it until the hour cometh for our departure. Every work of His hand preaches to us the duty and the delight of reposing upon Him only. S.

Is there any time in which the ruling sentiment of the Psalm—joyful trust in God founded on a memorable experience of His saving power—is inappropriate on the lips of any man ? May not we, may not all, who have "tasted that the Lord is good," sing as sincerely and heartily as the Jews themselves, "If the Lord had not been for us, we had been swallowed up, we had been carried away as by a torrent, we had been overwhelmed as in a raging sea ?" May not we, at all times, "bless the Lord, who has not given us up as a prey, but has broken the snares in which we were caught, so that we too have escaped ?" May we not, should we not thankfully and joyfully avow that the Maker of heaven and earth has been and is and will be our help ? Amid the sorrowful and perplexing vicissitudes to which we are exposed, nothing is more essential than that we should know that He who made all things, and rules all things, is our Refuge and Friend. Living, as we do, amid the play of vast forces, natural and political, over which we have but the slenderest control ; affected, and profoundly affected, by events which we can neither shape nor foresee ; how can we carry a steadfast and composed heart to our daily toils unless we repose in the Divine and tender wisdom which orders all events and controls all forces to ends of righteousness and love ? How can we know any mirth, save the mirth of fools, unless we can joy and rejoice in God our Saviour ? *Cox.*

PSALM CXXV.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

1 THEY that trust in the LORD are as mount
Zion,

Which cannot be moved, but abideth for
ever.

2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
So the LORD is round about his people,
From this time forth and for evermore.

3 For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest
upon the lot of the righteous ;

That the righteous put not forth their hands
unto iniquity.

4 Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good,
And to them that are upright in their hearts.

5 But as for such as turn aside unto their
crooked ways,

The LORD shall lead them forth with the
workers of iniquity.

Peace be upon Israel.

THE exiles had been restored to their own land (see introduction to last Psalm), but fresh perils awaited them there. Not only were they perpetually molested by the Samaritans and others in the rebuilding of the temple and of the city walls, but they were troubled with internal dissensions ; Ezra found the "abominations of the heathen" countenanced by the intermarriages of the Jews who returned from the captivity with "the people of those lands," and was dismayed when he learned that "the hand of the princes and the rulers had been chief in this trespass." Nehemiah, at a later period, had to contend against a faction within the city who had taken the bribes of the Samaritans. In rebuilding the walls, he did not trust the priests, the nobles, or the rulers till he had begun the work (Neh. 2 : 16 ; 6 : 17). Even the prophets took part with his enemies against him. She-maiah, he found, had been hired by Tobiah and Sanballat, and "the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets" had joined the plot, and sought "to put him in fear," and so to hinder his work (6 : 10-14). To these plots and this defection on the part of many of the Jews themselves there is probably an allusion in vs. 3, 5. On the other hand, the faith of the Psalmist rises above all these dangers. There is One who is the sure defence of His people, who is their bulwark as the mountains are the bulwark of Jerusalem. P.

This short Psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet (Isa. 3 : 10, 11) : "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him." Thus are life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the Psalms, as well as in the law and in the prophets. H.

1, 2. Two images of the security of those who trust in Jehovah : They stand firm as Zion itself, they are like a mountain which cannot be shaken ; they are girt as by a wall of mountains—a natural bulwark against all enemies. P.—"Abideth forever ;" sits on her deep, immovable foundations. So firm is the standing, so safe the state of those who trust with serene and steadfast faith in Jehovah, the God of the covenant and of its promises. The realm of nature furnishes no figure for stability more fine and perfect than the mountain on his base. Oceans are tossed about by tempests ; the grand old cedars come down at last ; the clouds are fickle ; man's mightiest works of art pass away ; but the mountains are always firm to the human foot, are always there, quietly and grandly reposing on their changeless foundations. So are they who trust steadfastly in their God. In v. 2 the figure varies slightly. The mountains stand like military ramparts round about Jerusalem, encircling and defending ; so God is a wall of circumvallation all round about His people. The form of the Hebrew sentence is abrupt, but expressive : "Jerusalem ; the mountains are round about her, and the Lord is round about His people." C.

When God is in the midst of a kingdom or city He makes it firm as Mount Zion that cannot be removed. When He is in the midst of a soul, though calamities throng about it on all hands, and roar like the billows of the sea, yet there is a constant calm within ; such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. That is the way to be immovable in the midst of troubles, as a rock amidst the waves. *Leighton.*

2. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about His people."

This is evidently an allusion to the protection afforded to the city by the wild hills cut up by a thousand ravines, which guard it on every side, and render any approach difficult, especially to a large armed force. *Wilson*.—The mountains most emphatically stand “round about Jerusalem,” and in doing so must have greatly safeguarded it in ancient times. We are specially told that when Titus besieged the city, he found it impossible to invest it completely until he had built a wall round the entire sides of these mountains, nearly five miles long, with thirteen places at intervals in which he stationed garri- sons, which added another mile and a quarter to these vast earthworks. Assaults upon the city, even then, could only be delivered effectively upon its level corner to the northwest, whence every hostile advance was necessarily directed in all its various sieges. To those familiar with these facts, beautifully bold, graphic, and forceful is the Psalmist’s figure of the security of the Lord’s people. *Neil*.

The Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever. What can be spoken more fully, more pathetically? Can any expression of men so set forth the safety of the saints? The Lord is with them, and round about them on every side that no evil shall come nigh them. It is a most full expression of universal preservation, or of God’s keeping His saints in His love and favor upon all accounts whatsoever; and that not for a season only, but it is “henceforth even for ever.” *Owen*.

3. *For not to rest is the rod of wickedness over the lot of the righteous, to the intent that the righteous may not put forth to iniquity their hands.* This unusually long verse clearly shows the actual condition of the chosen people, here assumed or presupposed, as well known to the writer and original readers of the Psalm. The present ascendancy of wicked men is not inconsistent with the truth just stated, because it is to be brought to an end, lest the faith and patience of God’s people should fail, and they should be tempted to renounce His service as unprofitable—nay, as ruinous. *A*.

The “rod” is an emblem of authority, power. The “lot” represents all the interests, all that makes up the state, of the righteous, the sentiment being that the wicked shall not be allowed to hold power over the righteous. The reason is, lest the righteous be tempted beyond their virtue to resort to iniquity in resisting such rule. In this connection, the fact is one manifestation of God’s care of His trustful people. He will not leave them forever; perhaps the sense is not long, under the rod of the wicked.

The trial of His people under proud Babylon was terrible. In mercy the Lord cut it short in due time. *C*.

Lest the righteous put forth their hands. The trial is to prove faith, not to endanger it by too sharp a pressure; *lest*, overcome by this, even the faithful put forth a hand to forbidden pleasure; through force of custom gradually persuading to sinful compliance, or through despair of good, as the Psalmist describes some in his day who witnessed the prosperity of wicked men. *Bib. Com.*

Here is a reason why our Lord will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest on the righteous: “Lest he put forth his hand unto iniquity.” We never suffer judgment, but mercy is in it; our troubles are dealt out to us by the hand of love; mercy is mixed with them all. The Lord knows the righteous is but frail; He remembers he is but dust, and liable to sin; He is wise to prevent this. When oppression and trials from the wicked bring us low and make us cry to the Lord, then we honor His grace and His power, His truth and His love, by the affiance of our heart. *W. Mason*.—God has set a limit to the woes of His chosen; the rod may light on their portion, but it shall not rest upon it. The righteous have a lot which none can take from them, for God has appointed them heirs of it by gracious entail; on that lot the rod of the wicked may fall, but over that lot it cannot have lasting sway. The saints abide forever, but their troubles will not. *S*.

4, 5. With full heart the Psalmist prays (and invites all to join) for all good to be given to the good, but for such as turn aside from righteous to morally crooked ways, he can only say, The Lord will give them their portion according to their works; with those of their own class. So it must be. How can praying men, living in sympathy with God and righteousness, offer any other prayer as to the final doom of sinners whom the richest offered mercy fails to reclaim? *C*.

4. They that do good shall find all things working together for their good; if they have a loss they shall receive good by it; if they bear a cross, that cross shall bear good to them. *Caryl*.—The persons for whom prayer is presented, and who have an interest in the Divine promises, are brought before us under different denominations. In the first verse they are described as trusting in the Lord; in the second verse they are described as the Lord’s people; in the third verse they are called the righteous; in the fourth verse they are called good and upright in heart, and in the fifth verse they are called Israel. *N. M. Michael*.

5. *Such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* The ways of sin are called "*crooked ways.*" The Psalmist calls them "*their crooked ways;*" that is, the ways of their own devising; whereas the way of holiness is the Lord's way. To exceed or do more; to be deficient or do less, than God requires, both these are "*crooked ways.*" The way of the Lord lies straightforward, right before us. *Caryl.*

There was no time in their history when the assurance would not be welcome that God was for them, and that, because they put their trust in Him, they were like Mount Zion, which could not be moved, but stood firm forever. There was no time at which they would not be glad to hear, and to affirm, that God was round about them as the nearer and more distant ranges stood round Jerusalem, so that they need fear no evil. There was no time in which some of them would not consider themselves wronged and oppressed, and take comfort in the promise that the rod of wickedness should not "rest" on the lot of the righteous. There was no time in which an Israelite indeed would not heartily pray that the good might thrive, and that the crafty and the profligate might be destroyed out of the land, or in which "Peace be upon Israel!" would not express the desire of his heart. And hence this song would take its place by natural right in the pilgrims' Psalm-book, and be chanted by generation after generation. Nay, more; in its main scope the Psalm is as appropriate to us as to any Hebrew of them all. In crises of our history we get glimpses of a great darkness hanging all round us, which may at any moment break loose from its bounds, rush over us, and put out all the lights of joy and hope, unless we have the life that springs from the knowl-

edge of God, the strength and courage and unabashed hope which result from trust in Him. And even if we do trust in Him, and so trust in Him that nothing can really harm us, we do not, therefore, lose all fear of harm. Loss, disappointment, tribulation, bereavement, a clouded brain, a broken heart, *may* harm us, we think; we are not sure that we could meet them with fortitude and hope, or even the immediate prospect of them, although we confess that God *could* make even these work together for our good. And, therefore, it is pleasant and helpful to us to hear that, as our trust in God grows more perfect, we shall become like a mountain which no tempest can shake. It is pleasant and reassuring to hear that God bends lovingly and protectingly round us. We know and feel that "God is love;" that our defects and griefs are designed to inure and discipline our spirits, to test our constancy, to perfect our patience, to call forth our courage; we rest quietly in the assurance that the love which has ordained our discipline will, by that very discipline, at last redeem us from our defects, and pour itself out upon us in a large, full tide of gifts that will satisfy and transcend our every need and wish. Till that day come, we are content to pray, in the spirit of our Psalm: Do good to them that are good, O Lord! Make us good that we may know good. And sweep away from our path all that is subtle and crooked, no less than all that is openly and unblushingly iniquitous. And grant us Thy peace. Help us to rest in Thee, and in the Providence that guards us, and in the Wisdom that tries and proves us, and in the Love that even now sustains us and that will at the last enrich us with all good. May we rejoice in Thee with all who put their trust in Thee, and share Thy peace with all that are upright in their hearts. *Cox.*

PSALM CXXVI.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

- 1 WHEN the LORD brought back those that returned to Zion,
 We were like unto them that dream.
 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
 And our tongue with singing :
 Then said they among the nations,
 The LORD hath done great things for them.
 3 The LORD hath done great things for us ;

Whereof we are glad.

- 4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
 As the streams in the South.
 5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
 6 Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed ;
 He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

THE first colony of exiles had returned to Palestine. The permission to return had been so unexpected, the circumstances which had led to it so wonderful and so unforeseen, that when it came it could hardly be believed. To those who found themselves actually restored to the land of their fathers it seemed like a dream. It was a joy beyond all words to utter. God, their father's God, had indeed wrought for them, and even the heathen had recognized His hand. It is with these thoughts that this beautiful Psalm opens. But after all, what was that little band of settlers which formed the first caravan? It was but as the trickling of a tiny rill in some desert waste. Hence the prayer bursts from the lips of the Psalmist, Bring back our captives like mighty streams, which, swollen by the wintry rains, descend to fertilize the parched and desolate wilderness. Then comes the thought of the many discouragements and opposition which the first settlers had to encounter ; it was a time of sowing in tears (Ezra 4 : 11-24). Still faith could expect a joyful harvest. He who had restored them to the land would assuredly crown His work with blessing. P.

1-3. Babylon was the great military empire of antiquity, "that fierce and impetuous nation which marched across the breadths of the earth to seize upon dwelling-places that were not its own." Its victorious arms were in every land. It gathered to itself the strength and the riches of all nations. That it should be overthrown by the poor hill-tribes of Persia, led by Cyrus, had, indeed, been predicted by Isaiah, but was, nevertheless, wellnigh as great a marvel to the Jews as to other Eastern races. That the Lord should "stir up the spirit of the King

of Persia" to proclaim Jehovah "the God of heaven," to affirm, "the Lord God of heaven, who hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem," and to set free as many of "His people" as were willing to "go up to Jerusalem and build the house of the Lord God of Israel"—all this was so strange, so unexpected, so far beyond the reach of hope, that, when the Hebrew captives heard it, they were "like unto them that dream," and could not believe for wonder and joy. "This was the Lord's doing," none but He *could* have done it, "and it was marvellous in their eyes." Cox.

When the first band of exiles, forty-two thousand in number, found themselves once more in the city of their fathers, when they recalled the former glories of Jerusalem, and caught glimpses of a possible glorious future, a restored temple and worship, a flourishing national metropolis, a reinvigorated national life, it seemed too good to be true. In the language of our Psalm they were "like them that dream." Their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with singing. They recognized their deliverance with all its marvels, as the work of Jehovah, and gave Him the glory, saying, "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad." Even the heathen around them for once refrained from scoffing. The deliverance, the return, were so wonderful, so directly in the face of all probability, that they were forced to acknowledge the interposition of some higher power ; and they, too, took up the current saying, "Jehovah hath done great things for them." V.—And as the Hebrews heard such confessions of the power and goodness of Him whom they worshipped, how

could they but again acknowledge (v. 3), "Jehovah *hath* done great things for us," and affirm, "We are glad," glad in Him? *Cox.*

1. We were like them that dream.

In the lapse of seventy years the hope of restoration to their land, so long deferred, had mostly gone out in despair, save as it rested (in some minds) on their faith in God's promise. The policy of those great powers in the East had long been settled—viz., to break up the old tribes and kingdoms of Western Asia; take the people into far eastern countries, and *never let them return*. No nation known to history except the Jews ever did return to rebuild their ancient cities and homes. Hence this joyous surprise. *C.*

2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter.

They that were laughed at now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies. *H.*—They who feel their captivity shall have their mouths filled with laughter and joy; that is, redemption and deliverance from sin and death shall be preached unto them. This is the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost, that their mouth shall show forth nothing else but great gladness through the inestimable consolations of the Gospel, with voices of triumph and victory by Christ, overcoming Satan, destroying death, and taking away sins. This was first spoken unto the Jews; for this laughter was first offered to that people, then having the promises. Now He turneth to the Gentiles, whom He calleth to the partaking of this laughter. *Luther.*

2. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is heard in the tabernacles of the righteous;" and men cannot but mark it and ask the meaning. It is a proclamation to them that we have in the midst of us a great heart-gladdening truth, of which they too may partake. Our tongue is filled with singing that they may be led to say: "The Lord hath done great things for them." *Ker.*

3. The Lord hath done great things for us. This verse is the marrow of the whole Psalm, occasioned by the return of God's people out of Babel's captivity into their own country. Their deliverance was so great and incredible that when God brought it to pass they were *as men in a dream*, it seemed too good to be true. The manner was so admirable (without the counsel, help, or strength of man; nay, it was beyond and against all human means); that they doubt whether these things be not the dreams of men that are awake. *Thomas Taylor.*

He in whom believers trust is a great God, and loves to do all things like Himself. Look, therefore, for great things from Him: great assistances, enlargements, deliverances; yea, the forgiving of great sins and the gift of a great salvation. *Arrowsmith.*—The Christian has had great things done for him of which his life is to be the witness. He is called by God's message, he is redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, he is renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost. Infinite grace has called him out from darkness into God's marvellous light. He has seen God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He has felt the evil of sin in his own nature, and has read its odiousness in the tragedy of the cross. Eternity has been unfolded to him. The unsearchable riches of Christ have been exhibited to him. Heaven has opened its gates to invite him thither. To him the apostle turns when he says, "Ye are redeemed not by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of the Lamb of God." Is such an one to be content with a low and worldly standard of living? *Gillett.*

4. This seems to be a prayer for the return of yet other captives. Let their restoration be as when from the northern hills of Palestine and Syria the waters flow southward, and fill the long empty river channels of the south. The Hebrew word for "streams" means strictly a river's bed, the channel which holds water when water is there, but is often dry. Naturally there is joy for the husbandmen when those valley-beds are filled again with flowing waters. So, the prayer is, Let Thy people return joyfully to their fatherland. *C.*

The returned exiles feel that their land and city, without their due inhabitants, lay bare and sterile, without life and fruit, like the southern plane under the drought of summer. They themselves are so few and helpless, they are but like a tiny rill trickling through a fervent waste in which it is lost. And hence they implore the Lord of hosts to *flood the land with men*, to bring back their captive brethren like the mighty torrents which, swollen by melting snows and copious rains, rush down the watercourses and clothe the barren earth with living green. *Cox.*

The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And when we are free and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity to join

with their brethren that were returned would be as welcome to both sides as streams of water in those countries, which, lying far south, were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country (Prov. 25 : 25). H.

5, 6. But with the prayer is joined, as there ought to be with all prayer, an expression of faith. They do not know that Jehovah will answer this particular request. He may make them wait long for the needed re-enforcements, but they are sure that this painful waiting and working will have a joyful issue at last. And this thought, too, is conveyed under a beautiful figure. V.

5. *Those sowing with weeping with singing shall reap.* **6.** *He may go forth, he may go forth, and weep, bearing (his) load of seed. He shall come, he shall come with singing, bearing sheaves.* The emphatic combination of the finite tense with the infinitive is altogether foreign from our idiom, and very imperfectly represented, in the ancient and some modern versions, by the active participle, which conveys neither the peculiar form nor the precise sense of the Hebrew phrase. The best approximation to the force of the original is Luther's repetition of the finite tense, *he shall come, he shall come. Load of seed*; literally, *drawing or draught of seed*. The only analogous expression is in Amos 9 : 13, where the sower is called a *drawer (forth) of seed*. The common version (*precious seed*) has no foundation either in etymology or usage. A.

The return of the rainy season suggests seed-sowing. But seed-sowing has in it more or less of anxiety, solicitude; for who at that stage knows certainly that his seed will return to him at all, much less with manifold increase? The sowing time, therefore, is not the hour for the song of "harvest home." But God's ways in providence are shaped to minister faith and hope to the seed-sower, justifying the proverb, "They that sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy." The Psalmist beautifully expands this proverb: "He that goes forth with his burden of seed, weeping as he goes, will surely come back with shouts of joy, bearing the sheaves of his harvest." The seed that is sown, wet with the tears of solicitude, care, and prayer, brings a sure and glorious harvest at length. This is even more universally true in spiritual labor than in material, more true of labors for truth and for the souls of men than in labors for "the bread that perisheth." Christian labor that takes hold of the heart's deepest sensibilities, that means earnestness and real work, that is sustained by faith in the mighty God and has

the witness of tears, cannot fail of fruitage in its due season. The shouts of the "harvest home" will be as the tears of sowing time. C.

5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Is it not the sacred law of *home life*?

As with the years come these mystical burdens of care and grief and pain and sickness and separation; as the life of one is imperilled for another, and the toil of one is poured out for all; as the loves and solitudes of all are twined and intertwined, and perchance as the ivies of memory are clustering over some grave that has been many times sown with tears, is there not each year a richer reaping in joy, that could not have been the joy it is but for the hallowed soil of immortal experiences out of which it springs? "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Is not this the law of *all higher spiritual effort*? They shall have the joy who have loved their work well enough to be willing to suffer in the doing of it. How many can bear witness that all the greater spiritual efforts of our lives for others must be a sowing in tears. There are reasons which, applicable to one case and to another, make it true of all that when the joy does come after spiritual effort, it is a joy purchased by sorrow. . . . The sorrow of the spiritual effort springs from the travail of the soul. If we ourselves were not in Christ and of Christ, this would not be. We might still love with a human love, and work with a human interest for the objects nearest to us, but we would not have the travail of the soul. But this is the very signature of Jesus upon our work, showing us that, after all, it is not ours, but His. It is not we alone who are sorrowing over this wayward soul, going so fast away from God; it is not we alone who are working in an almost anguish of desire to help this mind captured by doubts, and so helpless, to make that great self-surrender to Christ. It is He, it is He who is sorrowing with us, who is working with us. When one thinks of this, one is ready to accept the sorrow of the higher spiritual effort, and to go on sowing in tears. C. C. Hall.

All human life as related to the larger life of eternity is a sowing-time; and largely a sowing-time of tears. Life is a season of preparatory discipline for immortality; and the experience through which this discipline is perfected is often severe. V.

6. On this figure of the sower he lingers, expanding and retouching it. He gives us a tiny but finished sketch of an Oriental husbandman, who goes out into his fields carrying the seed, Eastern-wise, in the fold of his robe, and taking it out by handfuls to scatter it on the earth. As

he goes, he weeps every step that he goes, for the times are hard, the season unpropitious; there has been ■ great drought, the heavens being stayed from dew and the earth from fruit. But as we look with sympathy on the weeping sower, the scene suddenly changes, and, lo, we see the smiling reaper treading stoutly and cheerily toward the homestead, buried in the rustling sheaves he bears on his shoulders, and singing a mirthful harvest song! *Cox.*

The two pictures of the weeping sower and of the joyful reaper are here placed side by side; but in fact, as we all know, a large and thickly crowded interval lies between them; and it is in this interval that we shall find the great practical lesson for our immediate use. And the lesson is this; simple steadfastness, patience and hopefulness all through the tearful sowing-time. That joyful harvest scene means that the sower did not let his tears blind his eyes to the duty that lay before him. It was a bitter day when he went out with the seed folded in his robe; but the furrows lay before him, and the seed must be sown, and he went faithfully over every foot of the ground, promising or unpromising, and gave and did his best. And that is the lesson, very easy to state, but very, very hard to practise, which you and I must carry out in our sowing-fields if we ever reap a harvest. If we can only get it rooted in our minds that the tears, and the barrenness, and the lack of promise, and the hard toil and drudgery, and the present disappointment, mean joyful reaping by and by, that these are really God's ways to a harvest, we shall have gained very much. For that is the simple truth; but then it is a truth which becomes realized in fact only as we accept God's meaning in it, and work through the barrenness and the drudgery with God toward the fulfilment of God's intent; only as we accept the corrective hints which our discipline gives, enter and follow out to the end each line of duty on which it puts us, not despairing of ourselves, nor of our work, nor of God and Heaven, not wasting time in tears over the hardness of the soil or the scantiness of the seed, not trying to get round our allotted experience by some by-path, but going straight through it from end to end. *V.*

The husbandman can obtain no excellent thing without labor and persevering patience! The seed must be hidden in the furrows, decayed and corrupted before it can spring forth with any increase; *our hopes* are hidden, and light is sown for the righteous; all our comforts are buried under the clods, and after all this there must be long waiting; we cannot sow and reap

in a day; effects cannot follow until all necessary causes have first wrought; it is not in the power of the husbandman to ripen fruits at pleasure; our times are in the hands of God; therefore *it is good to wait*; ■ long-suffering patience will reap the desired fruits. "Let us not faint, or be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." *Manton.*

Growth, natural, steady, progressive growth, should be our aim; the growth which is the natural expression of the inward strength we have gained by a wise use of the truths and gifts and ordinances of God; growth never hasting, yet never resting; the growth which springs from the vivifying beams of the Lord our Sun, and the continual dews of the Holy Spirit, and a frank susceptibility to all pure and nourishing influences whether from earth or heaven. Let us be patient, then, with the patience of faith. Break up the soil; sow the good seed; water it with your tears and prayers; and then leave it calmly and hopefully with God. Don't be impatient for results, but have patience, and, if need be, "long patience." Don't be like foolish children, forever digging up the seed to see whether it grows or how it grows. But rest in the assurance that whosoever goeth forth weeping and sowing precious seed *shall* return again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him. *Cox.*

The Christian sower *sows himself*, his character, his spirit, his power of influence. He is himself a seed quick with Divine life; planted anywhere, God can make that seed grow into blessing. *Robert Tuck.*—Life is not mere living. It is worship, the surrender of the Soul to God and the vision of the face of God. And it is service, it is to feel that when we die we have done something to make the world better and happier, we have tried to cast upon the waters some seeds which, long after we are dead, may still bring forth their flowers of Paradise. The seed dies, but the harvest lives. Sacrifice is always fruitful, and there is nothing fruitful else. *Farrar.*—We do real good to others only at cost of self. Christ blessed the world not by an easy, pleasant, prosperous life in it, but by suffering and dying in it, and for it; and we can never bless the world merely by having a good time in it. Work for others that costs us nothing is scarcely worth doing. At least, it takes heart's blood to heal hearts. Too many of us are ready to work for Christ and do good to our fellow-men only so long as it is very easy, and requires no sacrifice or self-denial. But if we stop there, we stop just where our service is likely to become of use. This saving of life

proves, in the end, the losing of it. It is they who sow in tears that shall reap in joy. We may take easy work if we will, work that costs us nothing, that involves no pain or self-denial; but we must not, then, be surprised if our hands are empty in the great harvest-time. A. M.

Every act done in Christ receives its exact and appropriate reward. They that are meek shall inherit the earth. They that are pure shall see God. They that suffer shall reign with Him. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever. They that receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man; that is, because he is a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. We reap what we sow; not something else, but that. An act of love makes the soul more loving. A deed of humbleness deepens humbleness. The thing reaped is the very thing sown, multiplied a hundredfold. F. W. R.

Our text speaks not only of sheaves for the sowing, but of rejoicing for the tears. The very tears are a seed that shall have a joyful springing; the sorrow shall return again in joy. A. Mackennal.—All abiding and spiritual knowledge, infused into a grateful and affectionate fellow-Christian, is as the child of the mind that infuses it. The delight which he gives he receives; and in that bright and liberal hour, the gladdened preacher can scarce gather the ripe produce of to-day, without discovering and looking forward to the green fruits and embryos, the heritage and reversionary wealth of the days to come, till he bursts forth in prayer and thanksgiving. Coleridge.

Here is the *nature* of the Christian's work. He is one that "*goeth forth*." Religion is an active and operative principle. And he best illustrates the nature of Christianity who goes forth in the footsteps of his Divine Master, to instruct the ignorant and cheer the desponding and comfort the afflicted, and tell to lost and dying men, by the lettered page or with a brother's voice, of the blessed Saviour and the great salvation. The *spirit*, too, of the Christian's work is a spirit of which tears are the appropriate emblem—a spirit of piety, a spirit of sympathy, a spirit of love. He goes forth with tears—tears of sorrow over the lost, tears of joy over the reclaimed. This is the spirit which sends him forth and makes him successful. There is no agency so resistless as that of love. And what is the seed which the Christian laborer sows—what but the truth of God? It is the truth which, received into his own soul, has there quickened that soul into a new and earnest and undying life. This has changed

the whole current of his being, and sent him forth to move and win the souls of men. It is always so. No man ever did anything great or glorious whose own soul was not filled and absorbed by some truth which worked within him, and urged him onward to do or die. Anon.

Bearing forth. The Church must not only keep this seed in the store-house for such as come to inquire for it; but must send her sowers forth to cast it among those who are ignorant of its value or too indifferent to ask it at her hands. She must not sit weeping because men will not apply to her, but must go forth and bear the precious seed to the unwilling, the careless, the prejudiced, and the profligate. Edwin Sidney.—There must be constant, world-wide work and transmission. Human progress consists in this, that men have labored with body, with mind, and each next age has entered into their labors. "He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed," is the fit motto for all who have employed their minds for the benefit of mankind. The path of the reformers, civilizers, purifiers has been up-hill against reigning corruptions, against the hankering of man for a slothful, unthinking life; in short, against that lapse of souls from God for which Christ furnishes the only all-sufficient remedy. No philosopher ever so toiled to find out or to spread truth as reformers and preachers of righteousness to make the world and the soul better. They have begun their work in a sense of loneliness and insufficiency; they have held out against fear, scorn, and uncertainty. But these religious laborers have changed the face of the world. They have brought into literature and art new ideas of purity and spirituality, into life another standard of character by which all truthfulness, honor, justice, and benevolence are duly valued. And if the world has made great advances in these latter days, and is making them, is there not something inspiriting to the laborer in the hope of greater and more rapid success, in the hope of success in the highest of all causes—that cause of Christ which includes all temporal, as well as spiritual welfare? Woolsey.

Mind we the undoubted certainty of our harvest verified by divers absolute, positive asseverations in the text: "*He shall reap*;" "*he shall come again*;" "*he shall bring his sheaves with him*." Here's no item of contingency or possibility, but all absolute affirmations; and you know heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot of God's Word shall not fail. Nothing shall prevent the harvest of a laborer in Zion's vineyard. H. Hardwick.

No true word is spoken, no holy deed done that is not done forever. Every seed tells in the harvest. Every beginning is at its stage a completion ; and everything completed is at its stage a beginning. The harvest is the end of one sowing, but it is the beginning of a new sowing. And so as other men have labored, and we are entered into their labors, let it not be so much our ambition to be able to count the sheaves as to multiply the stalks into which in due time, by us or by those after us, the sickle shall be thrust. C. H. P.—A servant of God is to undertake his work with the clear understanding that he may not, personally, during his own life, reap the fruits of it. He must sow the seed in view of the possibility that the reapers may go to and fro over his grave to gather the harvest. And he must farther learn to rejoice in their reaping as his own ; to feel that if he do not gather an ear with his own hand, he shall reap just the same in the harvest which other hands gather. The best work which is being done for the world is the work which makes the least noise. The forces which are at work to move society most profoundly and to revolutionize it most thoroughly are those of which the general public is not conscious. And the man who joins forces with that kind of sowing need not be surprised if it be forbidden his feet to tread among the standing corn. Nevertheless, he shall reap. But one thing we have to do, and that is to take up our seed, and in God's strength and with God's good cheer in our hearts go forth to the sowing, be the ground good or stony, be the prospect of harvest never so remote. V.

The true success of life stands out from a background of self-denying toil, of struggle, and hardship, and manly endurance. The rich harvest-field, waving in its beauty to the breath of the winds, speaks of labor and culture, and the hard-won victory over a stubborn soil. Final success, the joy of life's ripe harvest, is the goal of our hopes. No wise or thoughtful man will live merely for to-day. Wisdom has regard to the grand issue. The true success of life is that which does not fail the evening of our days, and leave them to blight or barrenness. We want that shout of "harvest home" that will not die into silence with the failing breath, but makes the passage of the grave a whispering-gallery where heaven and earth talk together. That man who comes back from the field of probation's toil, rejoicing and bringing his sheaves

with him, he who is heir to God's "well done," is not the world-applauded hero, not the man who has piled up the largest heap of wealth, not the man that has drawn most notice, but he who in proportion to his talents can show the most permanent good done ; he who, though he has but few sheaves, has those of wheat and not tares, whose life-work has built not "hay, wood, and stubble," but "silver, gold, precious stones." Such seed as time sifts out of the lives of good men in faithful duties done, and holy examples set, and kindly words uttered ; such as the faithful parent drops into the soil of the young heart springing up to all generous, and humane, and heavenward strivings ; such as falls lightly as the snowflake about the hearth-stone where the home-group kneel to pray ; such as the Sabbath teacher drops into young and tender hearts, that it may grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength ; such is the seed precious beyond all price, the harvest of which shall be rich in more than golden sheaves. *Gillett.*

Nor, as we study this Psalm, should we forget that among the pilgrims who went up year by year to Jerusalem, there was One who took up the parable of the Psalm and carried it to new heights of meaning, both in His teaching and in His life. The man Christ Jesus was keeping the feast in Jerusalem—and as He went up to the city, He may have sung this very Psalm—when He addressed to His disciples the memorable words : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*" And in prospect of the decease ("the exodus") that He was to accomplish at Jerusalem, was it no comfort to Him to remember that He was the Sower as well as the Seed ; that if, as the Seed, He died, that He might live and bring forth much fruit unto God, so also, as the Sower, if He went forth, weeping as He went, bearing His handful of seed, He would surely come again, with songs of joy, bearing the sheaves that seed had produced ? It was His one comfort, and stay, and hope ; for it was for this joy, set steadfastly before Him, that He endured the cross, despising its shame. If, therefore, we have but a single poor handful of seed, let us sow it faithfully, even though we must sow it with tears ; for then we, too, shall "joyous sing the harvest home." *Cox.*

PSALM CXXVII.

A SONG OF ASCENTS; OF SOLOMON.

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| <p>1 EXCEPT the LORD build the house,
 They labour in vain that build it :
 Except the LORD keep the city,
 The watchman waketh but in vain.</p> <p>2 It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so
 late take rest,
 And eat the bread of toil :
 For so he giveth unto his beloved sleep.</p> | <p>3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD :
 And the fruit of the womb is <i>his</i> reward.</p> <p>4 As arrows in the hand of a mighty man,
 So are the children of youth.</p> <p>5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of
 them :
 They shall not be ashamed,
 When they speak with their enemies in the gate.</p> |
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THIS and the next Psalm form two bright companion pictures of social and domestic life, and of the happiness of a household which, trained in the fear of God, is blessed by His providence. "These pictures," says Isaac Taylor, "are mild and bright; humanizing are they in the best sense; they retain certain elements of Paradise, and yet more the elements of the patriarchal era, with the addition of that patriotism and of that concentration in which the patriarchal life was wanting. The happy religious man, after the Hebrew pattern, possessed those feelings and habitudes which, if they greatly prevail in a community, impart to it the strength of a combination which is stronger than any other; uniting the force of domestic virtue, of rural, yeoman-like, agricultural occupations, of unaggressive defensive valor, and of a religious animation which is *national* as well as authentic and true. Our modern learning in Oriental modes of life and its circumstances and scenery may help us to bring into view either of two gay pictures—that of the Hebrew man in mid-life, at rest in his country home, with his sturdy sons about him; his wife is still young; her fair daughters are like cornices sculptured as decorations for a palace; or else the companion picture, with its group on their way Zionward, resting for the sultry noon-hour under the palms by the side of a stream, and yet home, happy home, is in the recollection of the party; but the hill of God, 'whereunto the tribes of the Lord go up,' is in the fervent purpose of all; and while they rest they beguile the time with a sacred song and with its soothing melody. Happy were the people while their mind was such as this, and such their habits, and such their piety!" P.—This and the next may very

certainly be described as *domestic* Psalms. The theme of both is the home life of Israel; the former speaking rather of the home in the city, the latter of the home in the country. The one speaks of domestic life in its relation to national life; the other speaks of the home pure and simple, as it stands alone, with the pure, gracious heaven above it. *Cox.*

This Psalm can never be out of season, the design of its author being to teach us the necessity of a dependence upon God and His blessing, in every work to which we set our hands. No work can prosper without Him, nor can any design miscarry under His favor and protection. *Bishop Horne.*

God's blessing on His people as their one great necessity and privilege is here spoken of. We are here taught that builders of houses and cities, systems and fortunes, empires and churches all labor in vain without the Lord; but under the Divine favor they enjoy perfect rest. Sons, who are in the Hebrew called "builders," are set forth as building up families under the same Divine blessing, to the great honor and happiness of their parents. It is *the Builder's Psalm*. "Every house is builded by some man, but He that built all things is God," and unto God be praise. S.

That everything depends upon God's blessing, the poet proves by examples taken from the divinely ordained circles of the family and the state. The raising of the house that affords us shelter, the stability of the city in which we dwell securely and peacefully, the acquisition of the possessions that maintain and adorn life, the begetting and upbringing of sons who prove a strong support to their ageing father—all these are things that depend upon God's blessing. D.

1. All our intense care in the acquisition or accomplishment of any object, without the Divine co-operation and blessing, will be fruitless. It is utterly in vain that we should labor for that on which our heart is set, so as to leave ourselves neither rest nor comfort, if the counsel of the Lord, which alone can stand, be adverse to our views. Duties are ours, events are God's; and the way is to do these duties free from anxiety, because trusting in Him; and He will give us all that He knoweth we have need of. *Chalmers.*

The watchman waketh in vain.

The best guardians of your property are the men who, morning and evening, implore the favor and protection of God; *the righteous*, for whose sakes God ever spares or mitigates His judgments; who implore God to be your defence by night, and who acknowledge His merciful protection with the returning light of day. These are our watchmen and our bulwark. Oh, when shall *all* learn to commit their property, their families, and their lives to God as to a Father who is all-wise and powerful and kind! *J. P. T.*

He that closeth his eyes at night without prayer lies down before his bed is made. He is like a foolish captain in a garrison, who betakes himself to his rest before he hath set the watch for the city's safeguard. God is His people's keeper; but can he expect to be kept by Him that chargeth not the Divine providence with his keeping? The angels, at His command, pitch their tents about His saints' dwellings. But God looks, that by humble prayer we should beg of Him their ministry and attendance about us. *Gurnall.* Their thoughts are vain who think that their watching can preserve the city which God Himself is not willing to keep. And are not theirs as vain who think that God will keep the city for which they themselves are not careful to watch? The husbandman may not therefore leave his plough, nor the merchant forsake his trade, because God hath promised, "I will not forsake thee." *Hooker.*

The Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from laboring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing; nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth His power, to render second causes effectual. Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to

believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear. Much can be done by man; he can both labor and watch; but without the Lord he has accomplished nothing, and his wakefulness has not warded off evil. *S.*

There is progress in life, there is progress in history, because the Lord is building, working, and watching with man; and man is learning—slowly, alas! and by stages that seem imperceptible each moment, visible only over a long range of generations—that the one way of life, the one fountain of blessing, is the taming of his self-will to build, and watch, and work with God. The great concern of man's life on earth is the discovery and establishment of a harmony between himself and God. The concord of man's thought and activity with God's is the secret upon earth of all true, real, and abiding work. Man is the architect of his own character and his own destiny. Principles and habits of moral judgment and action are the true house of the soul, wherein it dwells and from which it comes forth to work benignly or malignly for itself and mankind. Of that house man is the architect, not God; that house he is daily building, and that building will abide and be the home or the prison of the soul throughout eternity. If you would build wisely, look to the foundations. Christ is the one Rock on which the house of life must rest if it is to escape the floods and fires by which all that is perishable must perish, and be lifted on high among the imperishable things through eternity. And build daily in conscious, blessed dependence on the co-operation of a higher hand. There is One working with you, working in you, who alone can make your building of the house of life a large and lasting success. *J. B. Brown.*

2. **Ye that rise.** The Hebrew expression runs literally, "making early to rise, making late to sit (down)," *i.e.*, going forth early to labor, and returning late at night to take rest. It is an artificial lengthening of the natural day. *P.*

We should give over undue and anxious labor to accomplish our designs. The law of work is in our nature. The limitations of effort are set forth in nature. In order that all may be accomplished by the human race which is necessary to be done for human progress, all men must work. But no man should work beyond his physical and intellectual ability, nor beyond the hours which nature allots. *Deems.*

So He giveth His beloved sleep. It is vain for you to be early to rise and late to rest, eating the bread of hard labor (Hebrew). "So," *i.e.*, all this, "God will give to His be-

loved *with sleep*." The beloved of God who trust His care and enjoy His blessings shall obtain their bread *along with* needful sleep—*i.e.*, bread, and sleep besides—without sacrificing sleep to excessive unreasonable toil. So I prefer, on the whole, to interpret this somewhat difficult clause. C.

I am inclined to prefer the rendering, "So He giveth His beloved sleep," though it is difficult to explain the reference of the particle "so." I suppose it refers to the principle laid down in the previous verse, there being a tacit comparison, "as all labor is vain without God's providence, as He builds the house, as He watches the city, so He gives the man who loves Him and leaves all in His hands calm, refreshing sleep." There is no discouragement here to honest labor. It is undue anxiety, a feverish straining, a toiling, as if toil of itself could command success, the folly of which is condemned. Compare for a similar sentiment Prov. 10 : 22, "The blessing of Jehovah maketh rich, and toil can add nothing thereto." The teaching is that of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, God's "beloved" are not exempted from the great law of labor which lies upon all, but the sting is taken from it when they can leave all results in a Father's hand, with absolute trust in His wisdom and goodness. P.

Quiet sleep is the gift of God, and it is the love of God to give quiet sleep. Have we through God's blessing this benefit, let us abundantly give praise and live praise unto God hereupon. Yea, large praise belongs to the Lord for quiet sleep. *P. Goodwin*.—Sleep is God's gift to His beloved. We owe it to His goodness that our sleep is safe (Psalm 4 : 8), that it is sweet (Jer. 31 : 25, 26). Then God gives us sleep as He gives it to His beloved when with it He gives us grace to lie down in His fear (our souls returning to Him and reposing in Him as our Rest), and when we awake to be still with Him, and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in His service. H.

When a man's capacity, full spent in good, comes to its limit, and conscience audits the reckoning of its hours, to fall back into God's sole keeping and be recruited by unconscious rest in His bosom is the true Christly sleep, at once a natural bestowment and a supernatural gift. Be it in a palace or a hovel, be it on the land or on the sea, be it in outward calm or storm, be it with man's approbation or without, the resting place is glorious, the rest itself a baptism of peace—"God giveth His beloved sleep." H. B.

The most unwelcome guest after a sinful

day is God. The most joyful guest after a day of honest and faithful service is God. And here is where so many families miss the joy of Christian life. Where the evening song and prayer is in the home, there God comes with a smile and a blessing that calms us to rest. He lifts off our hearts the burden of daily care, and we find sleep, knowing that He is watching over us. *Interior*.

3. Behold, as drawing particular attention to one marked example of God's good gifts ; which none can question is emphatically His *gift* ; on this the poet lingers, "allured by the charm of the subject," for such there was, especially to an Oriental, to whom a numerous progeny was the first of blessings, giving value and stability to all others. P.

Children are an heritage of the Lord. The Psalmist speaks of what children are unto godly parents, for unto such only is any blessing given by God as a reward, and the Psalmist expressly speaks of blessings which God gives His beloved ones. *T. Goodwin*.—There is no reason why you should be apprehensive for your families and country ; there is no reason why you should weary yourselves with such great and such restless labor. God will be with you and your children, since they are His heritage. *Le Blanc*.—He who gave them will feed them ; for it is a fact, and the *maxim* formed on it has never failed, "Wherever God sends mouths, He sends meat." "Murmur not," said an Arab to his friend, "because thy family is large ; know that it is for *their sakes* that God feeds thee." *A. Clarke*.

Children are an heritage of the Lord, and as God's heritage children are worthy of honor, as precious in God's sight. "Fathers," says the inspired apostle—and the father always includes the mother as his "better half"—"provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged." There is no surer way of provoking a child to discouragement than by withholding from him that honor for his nobler nature which is fairly his due ; and he who fails to honor his child fails in his duty to his child. Our children deserve honor from us ; for they are one generation older than we are : and they are beginning life on the elevation at which we are quitting it. They have, in the very nature of things, finer possibilities than it was ours to realize, because they are our children ; and the probability is that their faults are not so marked or so injurious as ours have been. While we fail to give our children the honor that is their due, we hold them back from the progress they might be making ; whereas, while we give them

their meed of honor and respect, we are thereby helping them upward and forward, by inciting them to a struggle for the lofty ideal we perceive and point out to them as their own. If, indeed, we cannot see anything to honor in our children, in one direction or in another, we are helpless to be their helpers in that direction; for honoring a child is an essential factor in the helping of a child. H. C. T.

One of the first duties of a genuinely Christian parent is to show a generous sympathy with the plays of his children; providing playthings and means of play, inviting suitable companions for them, and requiring them to have it as one of their pleasures, to keep such companions entertained in their plays, instead of playing always for their own mere self-pleasing. Sometimes, too, the parent having a hearty interest in the plays of his children, will drop out for the time the sense of his years, and go into the frolic of their mood with them. They will enjoy no other time so much as that, and it will have the effect to make the authority, so far unbent, just as much stronger and more welcome, as it has brought itself closer to them, and given them a more complete show of sympathy. *Bushnell.*

4. These sons of a man's youth are particularly mentioned, because they would naturally grow up to be a support and protection to their father in his old age, when he would most need their support. P.—Our children are what we make them. They are represented "*As arrows in the hand of a mighty man,*" and *arrows* go the way we aim them. *Anon.*—"*Children of the youth*" are "*arrows in the hand,*" which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation; but afterward, when they are gone abroad in the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these "*arrows in the hand*" too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave. H.

5. Among the Jews a numerous offspring was regarded as a marked instance of Divine favor, and the birth of a child was hailed with thanksgiving as a special gift of God. In all our earthly experiences there is no expression of Divine love to be compared with this. What love the babe brings! what love it inspires! what hope it awakens! what joy it kindles! how it draws around it all the hearts of the household in a tender sympathy, a sacred unity, which should bind them all the closer to their Father in heaven! J. P. T.

A recent discovery of classical sculptures has recalled attention to the fact that the ancients had, so far as appears from their works, no appreciation of the beauty of childhood. "The artists whose work has afforded models for all time have not left a single specimen of that beauty which modern eyes most admire, the beauty of childhood." And in Grecian and Roman literature there is none of that happy picturing, that dwelling with delight upon the beauties of childhood that seem to have entered into the very essence of modern natures. To the Romans, "infancy was only a journey toward manhood; the sooner it was over the better." "The sympathy with childhood, which gives its coloring to modern literature and art, is to be traced back to utterances which have influenced more than the literature and art of modern Europe. 'Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' was a saying new to the world. The fresh aspect under which all weakness, all dependence appeared in the light of that teaching was evidently bewildering to its hearers." It took centuries for the Christian world to take in the full meaning of that utterance, which has not been realized as a fact of ordinary life till nearly our own time. *Popular Science Monthly.*

Not be ashamed. The father and such a host of sons surrounding him (this is the complex subject) form a phalanx not to be broken through. Unjust judges, malicious accusers, false witnesses, draw back in alarm from before a family so capable of defending itself. D.

In the gate, here mentioned chiefly as the place of judgment, as well as of all public acts. The allusion is to lawsuits, in which, if unjustly accused or brought before an unrighteous judge, a man need not fear lest he should be "put to shame," *i.e.*, lose his cause; his stalwart sons would not suffer might to prevail against right. P.

Able enough he shall be to defend himself and keep off all injuries, being fortified by his children; and if it happen that he hath a cause depending in the gate, and to be tried before the judges, he shall have the patronage of his children, and not suffer in his plea for want of advocates; his sons will stand up in a just cause for him. *W. Nicholson.*

Fairly read, the Psalm has a remarkable unity of thought. Not only does it take for its theme the dependence of man on God, it also limits its illustrations of this theme to the circle of domestic and civic life. Home and its happi-

ness, the State and its security, are all of God ; we can neither found nor maintain them apart from Him ; if we trust in Him, we need not exhaust ourselves with toil, nor fret ourselves with care ; He will give us success even when we seem to fail, and bless us even as we lie asleep ; let us therefore rest in Him. Of course the Psalmist intends no disparagement of honest labor and a wise vigilance, any more than our Lord did when He bade us not be careful for the morrow because the morrow would take care of itself. What he deprecates, what he condemns, is that excessive devotion to labor, that undue and self-defeating anxiety, that feverish straining after immediate success and immoderate gains, which are often as fatal to the very ends men pursue as they always are to the dignity, enjoyment, and peace of human life. By all means "take thought," if you would build up either the home or the commonwealth ; be diligent and strenuous in endeavor, be provident, be circumspect ; but remember it is the blessing of the Lord that really builds the house and keeps the town, that fills the house with the stir of children and peoples the town with strong and valiant men to defend its gates. *Cox.*

I have lived for a long time [eighty-one years], and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid ? We have been assured in the sacred writings, that "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this ; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel ; we shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests ; our prospects will be confounded ; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business. *Benja-*

min Franklin, Speech in Convention for forming a Constitution for the United States, 1787.

If the bounties of heaven were given to man without prayer, they would be received without acknowledgment. Prayer, administering the perpetual lesson of humility, of hope, and of love, makes us feel our connection with heaven through every touch of our necessities ; it binds us to Providence by a chain of daily benefits ; it impresses the hearts of all with a perpetual remembrance of the God who giveth all. *Croly.*

The Psalm has a lesson for us. It reminds us that we depend on the Divine bounty for the blessings we most covet and prize, for the happiness of home, for the success of our labors, for the security and advancing welfare of the commonwealth. It affirms that we build in vain unless God build with us, and that we watch in vain unless God watch with us. And it rebukes that excessive addition to labor, and that feverish anxiety as to the outcome of our labors, which, as we all feel, is exhausting our energies and making our life hard and bitter to us. Everywhere in our own experience, no less than in the chronicles of the past, we find proofs that only as men live in harmony with the Divine will can they prosper and be happy, whether in their domestic or in their national relations and affairs. But to do the Divine will, to keep the moral laws in which that will has expressed itself, is to secure and enjoy the Divine blessing. When, as we build, we seek to do that which is right and good and true, God builds with us, and all the forces of the universe are on our side. When, as we watch the affairs of the State, and take our part in them, however small, we feel our dependence on the all-wise Disposer of events and put our trust in Him, God watches with us and over us. He blesses us in our work. He blesses us while we sleep. Let us, then, be careful that we do not exhaust our strength in incessant toils and in the anxieties which are even more exhausting than toil. Let us do the duty of the day with a cheerful diligence, and leave results in the hands of Him "in whose hands are all our ways." Thus trusting in Him, He will bless us with rest, and prosper us while we rest, and make our life bright and happy because we rest in Him. *Cox.*

PSALM CXXVIII.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

- 1 BLESSED is every one that feareth the LORD,
That walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands :
Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts of thine house :

- Thy children like olive plants, round about thy table.
4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed That feareth the LORD.
5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion :
And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.
Peace be upon Israel.

THIS is a sunny picture of the family happiness of one who fears God and leads a holy life. P.—In the former Psalm the prophet treated of both national and domestic life. Here also he joineth the two together, yet hath he more respect to household government or matrimony, because it is the fountain and source of civil government. Hence this Psalm is an Epithalamium or marriage song, wherein the prophet comforteth them that are married, wishing unto them and promising them from God all manner of blessings. *Luther*.—This is a song of the home pure and simple. It is the “Home, sweet Home,” of the Hebrew race. Not that the commonwealth is altogether absent from the poet’s thoughts ; his final aspiration is “Peace be upon Israel.” Nor does he altogether forget the fair and sacred city which God had chosen for “the habitation of His holiness ;” he is still concerned for “the prosperity of Jerusalem.” But in this Psalm Israel and Jerusalem, the commonwealth and its capital, are viewed in their relation to domestic life and as contributing to its happiness. *Cox*.

1. *Happy is every fearer of Jehovah, the (one) walking in His ways.* As if he had said, However things may now seem to an eye of sense, it is still a certain truth that the truly happy man is he who fears Jehovah not in mere profession, but who testifies his fear of Him by walking in His ways or doing His commandments. A.—Dost thou fear God ? Why, the Holy Ghost hath on purpose indicted for thee a whole Psalm to sing concerning thyself. So that thou mayest even as thou art, in thy calling, bed, journey, or whenever, sing out thine own blessed and happy condition to thine own

comfort and the comfort of thy fellows. *Bunyan*.

They whose blessed state we are here assured of are such as *fear the Lord*, and *walk in His ways* ; such as have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits, and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to His will. Such are blessed (v. 1), and *shall be blessed* (v. 4). God blessed them, and His pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and forever. It is asserted (v. 4), with a note commanding attention, *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed* ; behold it by faith in the promise ; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise ; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful ; and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favor, no blessing from Him. H.

2. *The labor of thy hands.* This is the first part of the blessing—the quiet, peaceful life of a thriving, prosperous yeoman in the country, with no fear that the harvest will be trodden down by the invader before it is ripe, or the cattle swept off by some roving predatory tribe. The opposite condition is threatened as a curse in the law (Lev. 26 : 16 ; Deut. 28 : 30–33). P.

We are promised a blessing upon hard work and honest industry. Though we are in God’s hands, we are to be supported by our own hands. He will give us daily bread, but it must be made our own by labor. The promise is that labor shall be fruitful, and that he who performs it shall himself enjoy the recompense of it. S.

We value and we enjoy every outward good in exact proportion to its cost to us, in labor of

brain or hand and in trial of heart. B.—Supposing it were possible that we could obtain the objects of our desire without any toil or trouble, we should not enjoy them. To benefit us really, they must be the growths of our own self-denial and labor. And this is the great lesson which the miracles of our Lord, wrought in the manner in which they were, unfolded. They teach us that, in both temporal and spiritual things, we should not so throw ourselves upon the providence or grace of God as to neglect the part we have ourselves to act—that God crowns every honest and faithful effort of man with success: “*For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*” *Macmillan.*

3. The comparison would perhaps be brought out more clearly by arranging the verse as follows:

“Thy wife shall be in the inner part of thy house

Like a fruitful vine;

Thy children round about thy table

Like the shoots of the olive.”

In the inner part, literally, “the sides of thy house,” as in Amos 6:10, i.e., the women’s apartments, as marking the proper sphere of the wife engaged in her domestic duties, and also to some extent her seclusion, though this was far less among the Jews than among other Orientals. The “vine” is an emblem chiefly of fruitfulness, but perhaps also of dependence, as needing support; the “olive,” of vigorous, healthy, joyous life. P.

The general type of an Oriental house is—a court, with or without a fountain and garden, round the inner sides of which runs an arched colonnade; under the arches are doors which open on the living rooms of the family; these arches and the walls under them are often adorned with climbing plants that yield flowers or fruit. Some such dwelling as this seems to have been in the writer’s mind. And he compares the householder’s wife to a vine which adorns its inner sides; the image of “the vine” being employed not only to denote fruitfulness, nor only dependence, but the grace, the added comeliness and cheerfulness which every true wife and mother lends to the life of the home. Their children are compared to “olive plants”—the olive being often found in the court of an Eastern house—because the olive was a recognized Hebrew symbol of vigor, health, and joy. Cox.—The wife and mother is a fruitful vine and a faithful housekeeper; if you wish to find her, she is within the house; she is to be found

both inside and outside the home, but her chief usefulness is in the inner side of the dwelling, which she adorns. S.

God has indicated in the structure of the physical frame, and in the mental characteristics which correspond, different spheres of duty for the husband and the wife. The adaptation of each sex to its sphere is equally perfect, and as both are parts of one indivisible race, the terms superior and inferior are not properly applicable. What is needed is a distinct recognition by each sex of its own sphere, and a cheerful acceptance of its responsibilities and duties. The object is unity through diversity, and, within limits, the greater the diversity the greater the beauty of the possible unity. M. H.

Thy children like olive plants. Follow me into the grove, and see what may have suggested the comparison. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to the common wealth and welfare of the whole. *W. M. Thomson.*

4. Thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. Here we have the living fountain of the blessing which rests upon the conjugal and domestic state. When worldly prudence attempts to choose a wife and form a household, it can apply its hand only to so much of the work as has its seat upon earth and is visible to the eye of sense. It builds, so to speak, the first and the second story, adds cornice and pediment, and the fabric presents a fair appearance; but it has no foundation. Whenever you see the household of a married pair continuing to defy every storm, you may be sure that it rests upon a sure foundation, lying beyond the reach of human sense, and that that foundation is *the fear of the Lord*. To the fear of the Lord, therefore, the holy Psalmist has wisely given a chief place in this beautiful Psalm, which celebrates the blessing that descends upon conjugal and domestic life. *Tholuck.*

4, 5. He shall be blessed in his wife, and blessed in his children; so blessed in both that the Psalmist calls all to behold it, as a beautiful, yea, wonderful sight, “*Behold, thus shall the man be blessed.*” And yet the man fearing God shall be blessed more than *thus*; his blessing shall come in the best way (v. 5), *The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*; His temporal mercies shall come in a spiritual way; yea, he shall

have spiritual blessings; and he shall have blessings beyond his own walls, *Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.* When a good man looks home to his own house and sees good there; when also he looks abroad to Jerusalem and sees good there, too, how full is his joy! how complete is his blessedness! and, *Behold, thus the man is blessed that feareth the Lord.* Caryl.

5. Looking on the beautiful family picture, the poet turns to greet the father of the household, and to wish him the blessing of which he has already spoken in such glowing terms. *Out of Zion*, as the dwelling-place of God, his earthly throne and sanctuary, whence all blessing comes. Then follows the truly patriotic sentiment—the wish that he may see *the prosperity of Jerusalem*, as well as that he may live long to see his children and grandchildren. The welfare of the family and the welfare of the State are indissolubly connected. P.

5, 6. Every blessing enjoyed by the individual comes from the God of salvation, who has taken up His abode in Zion, and is perfected by participation in the prosperity of the holy city and of the Church as a whole, of which Zion is the centre. A New Testament hymn would here open up the prospect of the new Jerusalem. But the character of limitation to this present world stamped upon the Old Testament does not admit of this. The promise refers only to a participation during this life in the well-being of Jerusalem and to a life long-continued in one's children's children, and in this sense intercessorily calls down peace upon Israel in all its members, in all places, and in all ages. D.

6. *And see thou sons to thy sons. Peace (be) upon Israel!* The first clause is a virtual promise of long life—*thou shalt see thy children's children.* An interesting parallel is furnished by Zech. 8:4, the whole of which chapter is indeed a prophetic commentary on this Psalm. A.—Long life and the prosperity of the Hebrew commonwealth were the deepest desires of the Israelite indeed. And these blessings the poet invokes on the head of the happy father of the ideal household. Nay, as he remembers how many such households there are in the land, that they are the real strength and glory of the commonwealth and how utterly they may wither before the hot blasts of war and invasion, he breathes the higher and more comprehensive prayer, "*Peace be upon Israel*, that so these happy homes may abide and multiply in the land."

"Home," say the poets, "is the last relic of Paradise." And however questionable that may be, there is unquestionably a breath as of Paradise in our Psalm. It is the picture of a happy home. God has blessed the land with peace. The husband and father goes forth to his daily toils, fearing no foe, saved from all anxiety by his trust in the Divine goodness and bounty. When the sun sets behind the western hills, he returns to "eat the labor of his hands," to teach his children the fear of the Lord, to sing praises unto God. His wife is fair to him as the vine which hangs from pillar and arch on the sides of his house; his children are pleasant as the vigorous olives which enrich his fields. This happy home is open to the sky. Thoughts of God are as natural to him and more precious than thoughts of temporal good. He loves Zion. He prays for the prosperity of Jerusalem. Three times every year he leaves his home that he may stand in the courts of the Lord's house. He lives in a constant reverence of Jehovah, and "walks in His ways," go where he will. It is a very sunny picture; it is an ideal full of purity and charm. If we analyze the Psalm to discover the constituents of this happy and noble domestic life, we find three main elements in it—*industry, tranquillity, godliness*; and each of these springing from a sincere and constant faith in God. By subtle touches that are not to be defined, by the very choice of his words and figures, the poet makes us feel how calm and deep is the household peace which springs from faith in God, from the obedience to Divine laws which that faith prompts, from the confident hope for the future which it inspires. '02.

Before the fall Paradise was man's home; since the fall home has been his Paradise. *Hare.*

The family was constituted in the beginning by the direct act of God, and with His special blessing. The sacred union of a single pair is the source of all domestic happiness; and the family so constituted is the basis of a true social state, and the germ from which the nation itself must grow. Our Lord quoted this original form of consecration to show the sacredness and permanence of the marriage-covenant, and added, "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." How tender and beautiful this care of the Creator for the welfare of the human race, through a provision that gives to natural affections the sacredness of a Divine ordinance and the promise of Divine benediction! They who would degrade marriage degrade man and dishonor God.

J. P. T.—The family constitution is in analogy with the moral government of God, as being a part of it and in subserviency to it. "Framed for this brief and transitory, yet all-important state of existence, and to expire with the last generation of human beings, still it points to what is permanent and unchangeable. In its constitution, as far as we can penetrate, it displays the nearest approach to the Divine government, and unquestionably it bears this resemblance with an immediate view to the best interests of that government. As man himself was originally created in the image of God, so it would seem, in the depth of his condescension, He intended to place him at the head of a government, the shade or similitude of His own." (*Anderson.*) And as, in the Divine government, the glory of God is coincident with the well-being of the creature, so in the family the honor of the parent and the welfare of the child are coincident. So that the highest interest of the child, the highest honor of the parent, and the highest glory of God are coincident. *J. Harris.*

The family is a Divine arrangement, designed to be preparatory to the Church. Every truly religious family is a little church. Its office is to train up God's children for *individual* membership in His *greater* Church on earth; even as the office of *this* is to train them more perfectly for their *collective* character, as "*the bride*," the Church in heaven, which is on the morning of the great day of days to be presented to Christ, arrayed in divinely effulgent glories, for the enjoyment with Him of eternal blessedness and honor. *J. S. Stone.*—God confides to every believing household upon earth the task of taking the seed that these great sowers of the Word have sown and cherishing it beneath the tender and gracious and mighty influence of home. Such is God's will and God's purpose for the preservation of His faith. The family is its safe hiding-place, its true nursery, that none can invade or desecrate. *Bishop Magee.*

The divinely established home is the home where self-support and habits of industry are promoted; the home where, in privacy and under wise jurisdiction, children may be brought up in modesty, simplicity, and obedience; the home where family worship may be maintained and religious teaching imparted; the home where the outside world may be admitted at our own option, and for its good as well as for our advantage. Home is the appointed school for man's symmetrical training—physical, intellectual, social, executive, and spiritual, and

when man and woman make home a school for life, for body and soul, for the neighbor and for self, for temporal good and for eternity. then and then only do they use God's best gifts of grace and of opportunity. *J. H. Vincent.*

The most beautiful and holy scene on earth is the Christian home. Constituted by the most intimate and peculiar relationships, sequestered from the general world by a common dwelling, and still more by peculiar affinities, united to each other by instinctive, intense, and indestructible affections, by community of interests, by identity of thought and habit and care, and imbued with a deep and pervading piety, its earthly love sanctified by heavenly, its common thankfulness finding expression by praise, and its common want in prayer, its tempers controlled, its affections hallowed, its virtues moulded and stimulated by the fear of God and the love of Christ—it realizes our highest earthly possibilities of sanctity and blessedness. Its natural affections are the most perfect and beautiful of which we are capable; and when these are hallowed and glorified by religious love and purity, they constitute a blessedness deep and inviolable and mysterious—a "peace that passeth all understanding, filling the heart and mind"—a blessedness so ineffable and holy that, as upon all deep blessedness, an awe rests upon it in the consciousness of him who realizes it. . . . The social intercommunion of our homes, so perfectly unique, founded upon affections so distinctive, the peculiar love of husband and wife, of parent and child, of brother and sister, must justly be regarded as one of the wisest provisions of our loving Father in heaven for our human happiness and sanctity. Just imagine the non-existence of these little social communities, our race multiplied in some way, each individual alone and isolated, save in the associations of accidental intercourse. How much the world would lose in kindly affection now developed and diffused by the genial influence of home alone! What inestimable treasure is its household love, hoarded in its million happy homes! What a qualification and correction of its hardness and selfishness! Where would the heart give forth its purest feelings, were they not solicited by the tender names of home? Where would its ruggedness be softened and fitted for kindly intercourse with men, if it were not there? Where would care relax its knitted brow and unburden its heavy heart were it not before the trusting love of brother and sister, husband and wife? In the crowd of men we should be utterly solitary; with appeals to our benevolence on every hand

we should be utterly selfish; shut up in his own little self man would have no fear for misery, no sympathies for friendship, no heart for love; surrounded by the world's temptations, he would have no sanctuary to which to flee, no pure and loving thought of mother and sister to arm him against temptation, and stimulate him to virtue. Thank God, we say, for the social and religious blessings of our homes.

II. *Allon.*

Those who have homes should specially seek to keep them free from everything that is false. To accustom the young to the view of double dealing in those whom God has taught them first to revere is to sap the foundation of all faith. That God set the "solitary in families," that He made a world with a father and mother, with brothers and sisters in it, and caused such pure affection to well up from these fountains, is His way of helping us to believe in genuine love. And yet it may be remarked here that while a home and children were intended to make men believers in unselfishness, some men may use them so that selfishness may grow. They may be made a more subtle means for the exercise of vanity and egotism. They should not close the door of the heart to the outside world, but open it more widely. If so used and filled with truth and pure affection, the family may be made the best of human agencies for destroying the unhappy distrust in all reality. Happy is the man who, when the outer streams become turbid, "can drink waters out of his own cistern, and running waters out of his own well;" and happy next is he who, when transparency seems to meet him no more in his later course, has such a fountain of purity to look back upon in an early home. *Ker.*

One of the most important requisites of home life is the intimacy that should exist between the parent and the child. This is, indeed, the foundation on which all good influences may be most securely laid. The control which is obtained through fear or force or bare authority has nothing abiding in it. Just as soon as the fear is outgrown or the force removed its power will pass away. But the influence which is at work where real sympathy and friendship exist between parents and children will abide long after the relation itself is severed, and will enter as a powerful factor into the whole life. There are two opposite extremes, both of which tend to prevent this sympathy. One is the prevailing fault of a past régime, which only required of this relation absolute authority on the one hand and absolute submission on the other. The spirit of the

times has drifted us into an opposite extreme, equally unfavorable to true parental friendship. The desire to impose no unnatural restraint, and to grant all possible liberty, has had full sway, and the result has been, in many cases, not a knitting together, but a virtual separation, to a great extent, between parent and child. To steer between these two dangers—to avoid, on the one hand, the austere discipline that engenders fear and dislike, and, on the other, the weak laxity and slackness that verge into indifference, should be the aim of every parent. To do this is not merely to seek an average between severity and indulgence; it is rather to establish such an intimate relation of love and confidence that the temporary displeasure of the parent shall be the keenest penalty, and the unrestrained expression of his affection the sweetest indulgence.

The friendship which should underlie this relation is not that of equals; it has a different root and bears very different fruit. The authority of the parent wisely and lovingly exercised, the obedience of the child gladly and freely rendered, are both essential to the growth of this peculiar friendship. That they may rightfully fill their office, there must be a firm, stanch, and loving loyalty and fidelity, each to each. The parent must truly sympathize in all the child's experiences and feelings; the child must look up with fullest confidence and loving trust to the parent as his best friend. There must be honest and genuine feelings, tenderly expressed, not in words alone, but in all the involuntary and spontaneous action of daily life. Founded on such an intimacy, and upheld by such principles, the homes of our land will indeed minister, as nothing else can, to the happiness of society and the character and welfare of our national life. *Ledger (Philadelphia).*—(Read Ps. 68:6.)

Among the mightiest influences of our homes are their memories. They bring happiness or bitterness, according as they are sweet and tender, or painful and evil. There is no need of argument to prove the influence of home memories in the formation of character. When one's childhood home has been true, its memories never can be effaced. Its teachings may long remain unheeded, and life may become a sad waste. Sin may sweep over the soul like a devouring flame, leaving only blackened ruin; but the memory of the old home lives on, like a solitary star burning in the gloom of night. Even in revels and carousals its picture floats in the mind like a vanished dream, and often it woos the wanderer back. It was the memory

of home that touched the prodigal son. But it is only of a *Christian* home that the best memories are borne. An ungodly home twines about the tender lives of the young within its doors no such sacred cords to bind them to truth, virtue, and love. The intercourse of an unloving household leaves no such joy-fountains, but rather bitter regrets and griefs, in the hearts of its members. And in a Christless, prayerless home, sorrows are not transfigured and changed into blessings. It is only when the cross is the centre of all that the memories of a home are hallowed benedictions. S. S. T.

There is one mark of a household in which God is known and loved, which is too often wanting in our day—I mean the practice of family prayer. Depend upon it, the worth of a practice of that kind can only be measured by its effects during a long period of time; and family prayers, though occupying only a few minutes, do make a great difference to any household at the end of a year. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, when each morning, and, perhaps, each evening, too, all the members of the family, the old and the young, the parents and the children, the master and the servants, meet on a footing of perfect equality before the Eternal, in whose presence each is as nothing, or less than nothing; yet to whom each is so infinitely dear that He has redeemed by His blood each and all of them? How must not

the bad spirits that are the enemies of pure and bright family life flee away—the spirits of envy and pride, and untruthfulness and sloth, and the whole tribe of evil thoughts, and make way for His gracious presence in the hearts of old and young alike, who, as He brings us one by one nearer to the true end of our existence so does He, and He alone, make us to be “of one mind in a house,” here within the narrow presence of each home circle, and hereafter in that countless family of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which shall dwell with Him, the universal Parent of all eternity. H. P. L.

The only condition on which the pilgrim life is possible, and the temptations of the world cease to draw our hearts, is that all life shall be filled with the consciousness of the Divine presence, our homes altars, and ourselves joyful thank-offerings. Then every abode is blessed. The undefended tent is a safe fortress, in which we need not envy those who dwell in palaces. Common tasks will then be fresh, full of interest, because we see God in them, and offer them up to Him. Life will be a life of walking with God, and progressive knowledge of Him; and over all the roughnesses and the sorrows and the trivialities of it will be spread “the light that never was on sea or land, the consecration” of God’s presence, and the peacefulness of communion with Him. A. M.

PSALM CXXIX.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

- 1 MANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth up,
Let Israel now say;
- 2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up:
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
- 3 The plowers plowed upon my back;
They made long their furrows.
- 4 The LORD is righteous:
He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

- 5 Let them be ashamed and turned backward,
All they that hate Zion.
- 6 Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops,
Which withereth afore it groweth up:
- 7 Wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand,
Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
- 8 Neither do they which go by say,
The blessing of the LORD be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the LORD.

THIS song sweeps its eye over the historic past of Israel, bringing back this one great moral lesson, that though their enemies had afflicted them

sorely, yet their God had always interposed in their time of need. This view of the past calls forth the trustful prayer that God would frus-

trate their schemes in all future time. C.—The nation, delivered from the Babylonish captivity, may well look back to all her past history, and trace in it the same great law of suffering, and the same ever-repeated tokens of God's mercy. The record is a record of conflict, but it is also a record of victory (v. 2). The great principle on which Israel's final deliverance rests is the *righteousness* of Jehovah (v. 4). That has been manifested, as often before, so now in cutting asunder the cords by which the people had been bound in Babylon. Full of thankfulness at this deliverance, the poet draws thence an augury and a hope for the overthrow, complete and final, of their oppressors. The Psalm consists, accordingly, of two stanzas, each of four verses; the first containing the record of the past, the second the prayer (which is also a hope, and almost a promise) for the future. P.

1-3. The youth of Israel as a nation was spent in Egypt, much of it in political bondage. Then and all along at intervals onward their enemies had oppressed them greatly—*much*, the Hebrew word primarily means; but in this historic review it may include frequency as well as severity. "Oh, let Israel say," the word for "now" having no reference to time, but being only a word of entreaty. Yet gratefully to God let me say, "They have not been able;" *i.e.*, to destroy me. They have scourged me sorely, "ridging my back with their furrows," where the wounds of the savage scourge are compared to the ridges of a ploughed field. C.

2. Have not prevailed. This is the point of the Psalm. The New Testament parallel is 2 Cor. 4 : 8-10, and the whole history of the Christian Church is an echo of the words. P.—As he reviews a thousand years of conflict with adversaries on every side, the writer can say, "*Nevertheless, they have not prevailed against us.* Even when we were driven captive into Babylon, we were not abandoned; even there Jehovah opened to us a door of life and hope; and here we stand to day, in our own city, our own capital, once more—alive, though we have suffered so many strange indignities, free, though long bound!" Cox.

The Christian Church may adopt the language of the Hebrew Church: "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me." What afflictions were endured by the Christian Church from her youth up! Despite, however, of every opposition, our holy religion took root and grew upward. Not all the fury of ten persecutions could exterminate it from the earth. The fire

could not burn it; the waters could not drown it; the dungeon could not confine it. Truth is eternal like the great God from whose bosom it springs, and therefore it cannot be destroyed. And because Christianity is the truth, and no lie, her enemies have never prevailed against her. *M'Michael*.—Israel prevailed with God in wrestling with Him, and therefore it is that He prevails with men also. If so be that we will wrestle with God for a blessing and prevail with Him, then we need not to fear but we shall wrestle the enemies out of it also. If we be the people of God, and persist in wrestling against His enemies, we need not fear but that we shall be victorious. *A. Henderson*.

3. As if he had said, My back was furrowed by their whips or scourges. We have here, then, an image of an image. The ploughing is a figure for scourging, and the scourging a figure for the manifold sufferings inflicted upon Israel by his cruel enemies. *A.*—Well did Latimer say that there was no busier ploughman in all the world than the devil; whoever makes short furrows, he does not. Whoever balks and shirks, he is thorough in all that he does. Whoever stops work at sundown, he never does. He and his children plough like practised ploughmen; but they prefer to carry on their pernicious work upon the saints behind their backs, for they are as cowardly as they are cruel. *S.*

4. *Jehovah (is) righteous; He cut the cord of the wicked.* He is righteous, and therefore faithful to His promise and to His covenant engagements to His people. The *cord* (not *cords*) is that which fastened the ox to the plough. This continuation of the figure in v. 3 is much more natural than the assumption of a new one, that of confinement by the tying of the limbs. According to the first translation above given, the meaning of the clause is, that Jehovah put an end to their inflictions by a violent separation from their victim. *A.*—*God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked*, has cut their traces and so spoiled their ploughing; has cut their scourges and so spoiled their lashing; has cut the bands of union by which they were combined together; He has cut the bands of captivity in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the mischief they design against His Church, and shaming their counsels. *H.*

5. *Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.* If this be an imprecation, let it stand; for our heart says "Amen" to it. It is but justice that those who hate, harass, and hurt the good should be brought to nought. Those who confound right and wrong ought to be con-

founded, and those who turn back from God ought to be turned back. Loyal subjects wish ill to those who plot against their king, and that with no trace of personal ill-will. We desire their welfare as men, their downfall as traitors. S.

6-8. Grass on the housetops; easily springing up, but having no root. The flat roofs of the Eastern houses "are plastered with a composition of mortar, tar, ashes, and sand," in the crevices of which grass often springs. P.

—Grass on Oriental housetops is of necessity short-lived, the soil for roots being the least amount which would admit any growth at all. With the first abatement of the rain and the first warm rays of the sun it must wither. Not "afore it groweth," for this construction would preclude grass altogether; but before one plucks it; *i.e.*, it withers of itself, under the agencies of nature, and without human hands to pluck it up. Still carrying forward the supposed case—with such grass no mower fills his hands; no binder of sheaves his arm; the passers-by could have no heart to say to men harvesting such grass, "The Lord's blessing be on you." C.

The enemies of Israel are as grass upon the roofs, which is not garnered in; their life closes with sure destruction, the germ of which they (without there being any need of an uprooting) bear within themselves. D.—The enemies of God's Church wither of themselves; nor are *they* anything but the unprofitable burdens of the earth; nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head; nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them than the husbandman does by the grass on his housetop. Their *harvest will be a heap in the day of grief* (Is. 17 : 11). H.

S. This is taken from real life. We find it in the Hebrew Chronicles as well as in the pilgrim's Psalm-book. As Ruth went gleaning amid "the alien corn," we are told, "Behold,

Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, *Jehovah be with you!* and they answered him, *Jehovah bless thee!*" Cox.—These expressions are most refreshingly Arabic. Nothing is more natural than for them, when passing by a fruit-tree or cornfield loaded with a rich crop to exclaim, "*Barak Allah!*" God bless you! We bless you in the name of the Lord! W. M. Thomson.

To these ancient pilgrims, as to us, life was often hard and sorrowful, full of mystery and contradiction. Their feet, like ours, often well-nigh slipped when they saw the wicked prosper and the good decay. They needed, as we need, to assure and to reassure themselves that God is righteous in all His ways, and that, because He is righteous, it must be good to be good, and bad to be bad. And it was well for them, as it is well for us, to be taught not to be over-hasty and extravagant in their thoughts, not to expect that the world was all at once to be shaped to their mind because they threw in their lot with the righteous and the good. It would save them from many a disappointment and heart-sickness to learn that the righteous have to contend with many adversaries, and must often be content with being not overcome, instead of gaining a brilliant victory; that the ploughers may be suffered to plough many furrows, deep and long, even on the back of the elect, before God sees it right to cut the traces; but that, in the end, while the righteous should be singing over their sheaves, the wicked would wither like grass on the housetops. Strangely as the conditions of human life have changed since the Hebrew pilgrims went up to make holiday before the Lord, these sacred lessons of trust, of patience, of an assured belief in the final and complete victory of good over evil, are not obsolete, nor will they fall out of need or out of use so long as the world lasts. Cox.

PSALM CXXX.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

1 OUT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

2 Lord, hear my voice.
Let thine ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications.

3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?

4 But there is forgiveness with thee,
That thou mayest be feared.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope.

6 My soul *looketh* for the Lord,
More than watchmen *look* for the morning;
Yea, more than watchmen for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is mercy,
And with him is plenteous redemption.

8 And he shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

THIS is the sixth of the seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called. It is a cry to God for the forgiveness of sin. The Psalmist pleads that he has long waited upon God, trusting in His Word. Out of his own experience he exhorts all Israel in like manner to hope and wait and look for God's mercy and redemption, which will assuredly be vouchsafed. P.

The passionate earnestness of the Psalm is enhanced by the repetition eight times in it of the Divine Name. *Bib. Com.*—This Psalm, perhaps more than any other, is marked by its mountains: Depth; prayer; conviction; light; hope; waiting; watching; longing; confidence; assurance; universal happiness and joy. *J. Vaughan.*

Being asked on one occasion which were the best Psalms, Luther replied: "The Pauline Psalms" (*Psalmi Paulini*), and being pressed to say which they were, he answered: "The thirty-second, the fifty-first, the one hundred and thirtieth, and the one hundred and forty-third; for they teach us that the forgiveness of sins is vouchsafed to them that believe, without the law and without works; therefore are they Pauline Psalms; and when David sings, 'With Thee is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be feared,' so Paul likewise saith, 'God hath concluded all under sin, that He may have mercy on all.' Therefore none can boast of his own righteousness; but the words, 'That Thou mayest be feared,' thrust away all self-merit and teach us to confess that it is all forgiveness and no merit." D.

If the Psalm be a penitential Psalm, surely penitence is seldom so bright and hopeful as it

is here; and if it be a Pauline, or theological Psalm, surely there never was a theology more generous and informal. Oh, that all our penitence were as quick with life and hope! Oh, that all our theology were set to a music as sweet and gracious! *Cox.*

1. The depths are the deep outward and inward distress in which the poet is sunk as in watery depths. Out of these depths he cries unto the God of salvation, and urgently beseeches from Him, that rules everything and is able to accomplish everything, a ready audience. D.—The Psalm has but two figures in it, or, rather, two allusions to one and the same figure, and these are made in the simplest and least dramatic way. Evidently, the Psalmist has in his mind the figure of a wrecked mariner crying to God "out of the depths" (v. 1), and watching, with yearning desire, for the break of day (v. 6). But he does not dwell on the figure. *Cox.*

The singer calls out of the depths, as if he were on some angry sea where waves and billows were breaking over him. The figure is strong, but not extravagant, for the evil complained of is not that of ignorance, or weakness, or sorrow, but of sin. The sufferer was before insensible to the number and character and aggravations of his sins, thought them few and slight and easily got over, and was therefore in peace. But now he sees what they are; how he has offended God, broken His law, trifled with His name, failed in reverence, in worship, in thankfulness, and in affection. To Him, therefore, to Jehovah he addresses himself. He prays earnestly and perseveringly. *Chambers.*

Depths of earnestness are stirred by depths of tribulation. Prayer *de profundis* gives to God *gloria in excelsis*. The more distressed we are, the more excellent is the faith which trusts bravely in the Lord, and therefore appeals to Him and to Him alone. Good men may be in the depths of temporal and spiritual trouble ; but good men in such cases look only to their God, and they stir themselves up to be more instant and earnest in prayer than at other times. The depth of their distress moves the depths of their being ; and from the bottom of their hearts an exceeding great and bitter cry rises unto the one living and true God. S.—It is not too much to say that we do not know what prayer may be till we have “*cried*.” And we seldom rise till we have gone very deep. “I die ! I perish ! I am lost ! Help, Lord ! Help me ! Save me now ! Do it *now*, Lord, or I am lost. O Lord, hear ! O Lord, forgive ! O Lord, hearken and do ; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God !” *J. Vaughan*.

Through humiliation to exaltation—this is the *indispensable* way for all, who not merely wish to do something, but really to *be* something in the spiritual kingdom of God. This is the *blessed* path for all God’s children ; they learn here in a manner which they can do nowhere else, to seek and to find God and understand what God is for them, and are grateful to Him, not merely *in spite of* their trials, but *because* in faithfulness He has afflicted them. *Van O*.

2. Mourning after an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as rejoicing in a present one. F. W. R.—A Christian is always on the perch, or on the wing ; he is always reposing in God, or in flight after Him ; and the latter is as good an evidence of religion as the former ; for delight is not only a part of complacency and affection, but also fear, complaint, desire—fear of losing the object ; complaint of our enjoying so little of it ; desire to attain and feel more. H.

3. Here he owns that he cannot stand before the great King in his own righteousness, and he is so struck with a sense of the holiness of God and the rectitude of the law that he is convinced that no man of mortal race can answer for himself before a Judge so perfect, concerning a law so Divine. Well does he cry, “O Lord, who shall stand ?” S.

4. There is forgiveness with Thee. It is our unspeakable comfort, in all our approaches to God, that there is *forgiveness with Him*, for that is what we need. He has put Himself into a capacity to pardon sin, He has declared Himself gracious and merciful and ready to forgive (Ex. 34 : 6, 7). He has prom-

ised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with Him found Him implacable, but easy to be entreated and swift to show mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with Him there is forgiveness. *There is a propitiation with Thee*, so some read it. Jesus Christ is the great Propitiation, the Ransom which God has found ; He is ever with Him as Advocate for us, and through Him we hope to obtain forgiveness. H. The glory of the Gospel is that it maintains and honors both justice and mercy. This fact and the reason of it are fully set forth in the New Testament, but are only intimated and hinted at in the Old. Here we have simply the assurance of forgiveness. It is with God, and partakes of His boundless perfection. Unlike human pardon, which often amounts to impurity and leads to recklessness, Divine forgiveness leads to the true fear of God ; *i.e.*, reverence for His name and will. The pardoned sinner renders grateful service to the God of his salvation. *Chambers*.

How is this forgiveness to be obtained consistently with the integrity of these laws ? How are the attributes of the eternal to be reconciled in the dispensation of mercy and the just guardianship of Divine commandments ? How is the law-breaker to be dealt with as a law-keeper, the transgressor to be treated as just ? By the great law of substitution, by the mediation of another, who says, “Behold Me, then ; Me for Him—life for life I offer.” This is the Scripture teaching. *Lorraine*.

To make the death of Christ a mere refuge-house for pardons is to degrade it to the most selfish end, and to receive the grace of God in vain. The Lord whom we acknowledge laid down His life to blot out all the sinful past ; but He rose again that, in His Spirit of purity and love, He might be our Leader in the war with sin in every form and degree. He consecrates us as His soldiers, clothes us with the whole armor of God, and sends us out to do battle with evil, first of all in the heart which is its stronghold. If the death and life of Christ are to have any practical meaning in our daily walk, it must be this, the death of the false and impure in us, and the springing up of a new and Divine life in their room. *Ker*.

The Father pardons, the Son propitiates, the Spirit purifies. The first of these three propositions involves the other two. Because it is the Father’s purpose to remit sin, He sends His Son to redeem and His Spirit to regenerate. The first has two seemingly insurmountable obstacles to encounter. How can God, being just, for-

give sin ; and how can man, being evil, return to God ? The former is overcome by the atonement, in which the Son of God becoming man obeys the law and dies the death, that the sinner who trusts in Him with penitent heart may escape death and enter into life. The latter is overcome by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, who by the Gospel makes the sinner aware of the mercy of the Father and the mediation of the Son, and willing to lean on the Saviour and return to the Fountain of mercy. These three fundamental articles of faith manifestly involve two others of co-ordinate importance, the trinity of persons in the Godhead and the incarnation of the Eternal Word. These may be called the five cardinal points of revelation. M.

What was the chief thing that moved the prodigal son to return home to his father ? He remembered that he had a loving father. That maketh him to resolve with an humble confession to go home. Even so is it with the sinner ; it is not terrors and threatenings that chiefly will move him to come to God, but the consideration of His manifold and great mercies. *Rollock.*

There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. These were good words to me, for it was thus made out to me that the great God did set so high an esteem upon the love of His poor creatures that rather than He would go without their love He would pardon their transgressions. *Bunyan.*—One would think that punishment should procure fear, and forgiveness love ; but no man more truly loves God than he that is most fearful to offend Him. “Thy mercy reacheth to the heavens, and Thy faithfulness to the clouds ;” that is, above all sublimities. God is glorious in all His works, but most glorious in His works of mercy. Lord, who can know Thee and not love Thee, know Thee and not fear Thee ? We fear Thee for thy justice, and love Thee for Thy mercy ; yea, fear Thee for Thy mercy, and love Thee for Thy justice ; for Thou art infinitely good in both. *T. Adams.*

If there were no mercy, there would be little fear. Men would grow reckless, desperate. All experience, the experience of all ages and countries, has shown this. Where mercy is never shown, crimes multiply ; men grow bolder, take their chance more recklessly, and meet their fate more doggedly, than when there is an occasional pardon and reprove. If God were extreme to mark what is done amiss, there would be no hope for any of us. But He has a prerogative of mercy, which He exercises in favor of those whom He deems worthy of it.

Because, therefore, He holds the prerogative of mercy, let us fear Him—fear lest we should render ourselves unworthy of it ; fear lest we should compel Him to withhold it ; fear lest we should miss it. *F. E. Puget.*

In that Thou shuttest all under free mercy, and leavest nothing to the merits and works of men, therefore thou art feared. But if all things were not placed in Thy mercy, and we could take away our sins by our own strength, no man would fear Thee, but the whole world would proudly condemn Thee. For daily experience shows that where there is not this knowledge of God’s mercy, there men walk in a presumption of their own merits. The true fear of God, the worship, the true reverence ; yea, the true knowledge of God resteth on nothing but mercy, that through Christ we assuredly trust that God is reconciled unto us. Christian doctrine doth not deny or condemn good works, but it teacheth that God willeth not to mark iniquities, but willeth that we believe ; that is, trust His mercy. For with Him is forgiveness, that He may be feared, and continue to be our God. So these two lines set forth to us the sum and substance of all Christian doctrine, and that sun which giveth light to the Church. *Luther.*

God was pleased to provide a sacrifice in nature so pure, in value so precious, as might be perfectly satisfactory for our offences ; in regard to which obedience God has become reconciled, and opens His arms of grace to mankind ; in respect to which sacrifice He tenders remission to all men that, upon His terms (most equal and easy terms), are willing to embrace it. *Barrow.*—Christ hath not only satisfied for the punishment, but He hath procured favor for us ; wherein He differeth from an ordinary and common surety. Christ does not only free us from bonds, but also hath brought us into grace and favor with the Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. *Manton.*—Though there are many mercies that lay an obligation upon men to be holy, yet he that shall want the obligation that is begotten by the faith of redeeming mercy wanteth the main principle of true holiness ; nor will any other be found sufficiently to sanctify the heart to the causing of it to produce such a life ; nor can such holiness be accepted, because it comes not forth in the name of Christ. That which constrained the Psalmist was forgiving and redeeming mercy, and that which constrained Paul was the love that Christ showed to him in dying for his sins and in rising from the dead. *Bunyan.*

Thus it is that the sinner’s chain is broken, and he is set free to serve God. First liberty,

then service ; the service of men set free from condemnation and from bondage. It is in accepting the Divine Substitute that the sinner is set free to serve the living God. The liberty flowing from forgiveness, thus received, is the true beginning of a holy life. If, then, I am to live a holy life, I must begin with the Substitute. I must deal with Him for pardon and deliverance. Thus being by Him "delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." If I am to serve God, and if I am to possess anything of "true religion," I must begin with the Substitute. For religion begins with pardon ; and without pardon religion is a poor and irksome profession. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." This is the Divine watchword. Not first the fear of God, and then forgiveness ; but first forgiveness, and then the fear of God. *H. Bonar.*

When *both sides* of God's character and government are revealed together, every point is gained. God *can be revered* and felt to be worthy of reverence, *can be loved* and be felt to be worthy of love. The righteous can feel safe under His shelter, and the wicked can dread His displeasure. The trembling sinner can look with hope toward the light which beams from His mingled justice and holiness. Man, in all the forms of society, can feel that God's known character and will is the cement which binds the *family, the State, the nations* of mankind together by a *twisted cord* of justice and goodwill. Man can now be educated for the offices of the world and for eternal life, for all time and all places *on one plan*, because the policy of the family and of the State is seen to be the policy of heaven and of the universe. Law reigns and pardon is offered to sinners without weakening the authority or venerableness of the lawgiver. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." Sinners are recovered and reclaimed first by a sense of sin, and then by a perception of Divine love, and without the latter they would not think of their sins, or grow into *that filial fear, that holy worship* which the Psalmist intends. Only under this twofold aspect of God is true religion, the religion of the soul, possible. T. D. W.

Where faith makes a discovery of forgiveness, great love, fear, and reverence of God are its attendants. Mary Magdalene loved much, because much was forgiven. Great love will spring out of great forgiveness. "There is forgiveness with Thee (saith the Psalmist), that Thou mayest be feared." No unbeliever doth truly and

experimentally know the truth of this inference. But so it is, when men "fear the Lord and His goodness." Where pardoning mercy is truly apprehended, where faith makes a discovery of it to the soul, it is endeared to God, and possessed of the great springs of love, delight, fear, and reverence. *Owen.*

5. He hopes in Jehovah, his soul hopes ; hoping in, waiting for God is the mood of his inmost and whole being. He waits for God's Word, the Word of His salvation, which, when it penetrates into the soul, calms all unrest, and by the appropriated consolation of forgiveness transforms and enlightens everything within and without it. D.

"Waiting" expresses a state or habit which is the result of a combination of desire, expectation, and patient submission. "Waiting on God" is thus the patient expectation of results which God has promised to secure, results which are in themselves desirable, and which God has given us reason to believe will be realized. It implies the exercise of self-control, a meek acquiescence in the Divine arrangements, a confident assurance that God will do what He has promised and show Himself in full accordance with all that He has revealed Himself to be. W. L. A.—*Waiting* is a great part of life's discipline, and therefore God often exercises the grace of waiting. *Waiting* practises the patience of faith. It gives time for preparation for the coming gift. It makes the blessing the sweeter when it arrives. And it shows the sovereignty of God—to give just *when* and just *as* He pleases. *J. Vaughan.*—Be sure that your soul is never so intensely alive as when in the deepest abnegation it waits hushed before God. A. M.

I wait . . . I hope. Waiting and hoping ever attend the same thing. No man will wait for that which he hath no hope of, and he who hath hope gives not over waiting till he gives over hoping. The object of hope is some future good, but the act of hoping is at present good, and that is present pay to bear our charges in waiting. The word implies both a patient waiting and a hopeful trusting. *Caryl.*—This waiting, hoping attitude is the attitude of a true heart, of one not easily discouraged, of one that says, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." P.

Knowing the boundless compassion of Jehovah, the believer waits for Him, for the manifestation of His favor. This is not a formal act, but one in which all his powers are engaged—"My soul doth wait." He knows the value of the blessing, and seeks it accordingly

where alone it is to be obtained, even in Jehovah. Nor is this a vague and uncertain dependence, but one with a solid basis—"In His Word do I hope." The promise of God gives a sure warrant; and having this the soul is able to wait the Lord's time, for His Word is the Word of One who never speaks in vain. *Chambers.*

Hope without patience would be life kindling into over-intensity, and burning itself out in fruitless longings. Patience without hope would be the decay of life's flame for want of nourishment, till it would sink into the quietude of death. Whenever hope rises into impatience, it is the will of God that quiet waiting should lay its hand upon it, and bid it "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and not fret," for there is purpose in his delay, and occupation meanwhile for us. When patient waiting, on its side, becomes indifferent or torpid, it is not less the will of God that hope should come and wake it up, as the cry did the slumbering virgins, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him." On either side we may fall into sin, and the fully approved state is to have the eye looking forward, while the heart is at rest; to combine these two, as they are found so often in the Bible: By the Psalmist, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope." *Ker.*

And in His word do I hope. This is the source, strength, and sweetness of waiting. Those who do not hope cannot wait; but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. God's Word is a true Word, but at times it tarries; if ours is true faith it will wait the Lord's time. Waiting, we study the Word, believe the Word, hope in the Word, and live on the Word; and all because it is "*His Word*," the Word of Him who never speaks in vain. Jehovah's Word is a firm ground for a waiting soul to rest upon. *S.*

6. My soul (looketh) for; literally, "My soul is unto the Lord," as the eyes of watchers through the long and weary night look eagerly for the first streaks of the coming day. *P.*—*Watching for the morning, watching for the morning.* There is something beautiful and touching in this simple repetition. The comparison suggested is between the impatience of nocturnal watchers for the break of day and that of sufferers for relief, or of convicted sinners for forgiveness. *A.*—The night-watch of the temple, or sentinels watching a city or an encampment might also be included in the term, and indeed all who, from whatever cause, are obliged to keep awake. No figure could more beautifully express the longing of the soul for

the breaking of the day of God's loving mercy. *P.*

Hoping in this Word, which has been his constant stay while tossing on the waves and sinking in the depths, he now gathers up all the energies of his soul and bends them toward the living and compassionate Ruler of men. Will He not come? *will* He not come? and come, bringing with Him a new day of mercy? For the breaking of that happy day the Psalmist longs and yearns more than the watcher on the wreck for the dawning light, which may show him that he is not solitary, or may even reveal some haven of refuge or some approaching deliverance. *Coz.*

S. Literally, "O Israel, hope thou in the Lord;" the ground of inspiring hope being that with Him pardoning mercy is much, great, plenteous; it comes not in scanty measure, but in measure abundant; not from reluctant hand and heart, but from a full hand and overflowing heart! *C.*—Whatever is in store for you, if you go trustfully and prayerfully forward into that future, you will find many sweet mercies there awaiting you, many blessings at this moment unsurmised; and you will find that in that future God awaits you, as powerful and as kind as He has been in the most favored past. So, summon up courage and go cheerfully forward. "Hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy." And whatever else you limit, set no limits to the loving-kindness of the Lord, nor to the largeness of those petitions by which the needy suppliant honors the liberal Giver. *Hamilton.*

Let Israel hope in the Lord.

There is nothing which isolates a man so awfully as a consciousness of sin and of his relation to God; but there is nothing that so knits him to all his fellows and brings him into such wide-reaching bonds of amity and benevolence as the sense of God's forgiving mercy for his own soul. So the call bursts from the lips of the pardoned man, inviting all to taste the experience and exercise the trust which have made him glad. *A. M.*

Worldly hopes are not living, but dying hopes; they die often before us, and we live to bury them and see our own folly and infelicity in trusting to them; but at the utmost they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no further. But the living hope, which is the Christian's portion, answers expectation to the full and much beyond it, and deceives no way but in that happy way of far exceeding it. *Leighton.*

Plenteous redemption; or, more

literally, "redemption plenteously." He calls it plenteous, as Luther says, because such is the straitness of our heart, the slenderness of our hopes, the weakness of our faith, that it far exceeds all our capacity, all our petitions and all our desires. P.—Though *you* are unworthy, yet *Christ* is worthy. Though you have no merit, yet God has mercy. Though there is no salvation for you by the *law*, yet there is "*plenteous redemption*" in the *Gospel*. *T. Brooks.*

Temptations may harass and even defile, the world may come in like a spring-flood, inbred sin may reassert its sway, clouds of error may overshadow, despondency may impair the comforts of believing; but amidst all, and through all, God carries on the good work and "will perform it unto the day of redemption." Faith at length gets the victory, growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ. J. W. A.—It will often happen in the experience of a much tried and tempted disciple that, even in the depths of his distress, praise to his God will be the readiest and surest road out of those depths and up to the heights of spiritual joy and exaltation. If he dwells in prayer only on his needs and sins and sorrows, he will miss one of the supreme delights of communion with God. On the other hand, if he turns his thoughts to the unnumbered evidences of the Father's love and care for him, to the saving power of the outstretched arm, to the promises of succor and sustenance, and for all these pours out his heart in gratitude, he will suddenly find himself out of the depths into which he allowed himself to fall, and his only prayer need be for a continuance of the very blessings which have evoked his heartfelt praise. The God we praise is the God from whom all blessings flow, and we cannot praise Him too often or too much for His wondrous love in making us partakers of the richness and fulness of His blessing. *Interior.*

S. *And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* The pronoun is emphatic; only trust him for redemption, and He will Himself redeem thee. As the first clause shows by whom Israel is to be redeemed—by God alone; so the second shows from what—from sin, as the cause of His sufferings. A.—**He will redeem.** He emphatic, He alone, for none other can. **From his iniquities.** Not only from the punishment. The redemption includes the forgiveness of sins, the breaking of the power and dominion of sin, and the setting free from all the consequences of sin. P.

What a graceful and appropriate conclusion

of this comprehensive and instructive Psalm! Like the sun, it dawns veiled in cloud, it sets bathed in splendor; it opens with soul-depth, it closes with soul height. Redemption from all iniquity! It baffles the most descriptive language, and distances the highest measurement. The most vivid imagination faints in conceiving it, the most glowing image fails in portraying it. *O. Winslow.*

Did the Lord come to this patient, hopeful watcher, and the day break on him? Yes, he had the desire of his heart. He was forgiven, succored, blessed. His hope did not make him ashamed. For it is out of the depths of his own happy experience of the Divine compassion that, in the closing verses of the Psalm, he bids Israel hope. The sinful nation, like the sinful man, will find that with Jehovah there is the very "loving-kindness" it needs, and a redemption so plenteous and bountiful as that it will save them from "*all their iniquities*" (vs. 7, 8). This is the spiritual experience half-veiled and half-disclosed in this penitential Psalm; the experience of one who endured the keenest sorrow for sin with a patient, resolute, and hopeful heart, and was at last cleansed by the Divine forgiveness and comforted with the Divine love. *Cox.*

This exquisite Psalm was a great favorite with Luther, whose versification of it still holds its place in the sacred songs of Germany. It was especially dear to him, as it taught the forgiveness of sins to them that believe apart from the law and without works. It was this Psalm sung in St. Paul's, May, 1738, and heard by John Wesley with deep emotion, that prepared him for the truth of justification by faith which he embraced shortly afterward, through reading Luther on the Galatians. *Chambers.*

The one hundred and thirtieth Psalm, the "De Profundis," whose undertone is like the sound of the sea, reveals the two great roots of Christian theology—sin and forgiveness. What a light is thrown upon the human heart by the words, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" What a glimpse into the redemptive work of God is opened by the succeeding verse, "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." What a testimony is borne throughout the Psalm, by the union of personal experience with dogma, that a true theology is bound up with experience and elaborated in living. V.

The great doctrine, the ruling doctrine of this

Psalm, as of the Gospel, is "the forgiveness of sins." This is plainly and repeatedly affirmed. "Forgiveness," "mercy," "plenteous redemption," are expressly attributed to God; and the sacred poet thus lingers on the Divine compassion, and places it before us in various forms that we may learn from him to put this dogma and Gospel *first* in our Creed, that He may leave us without excuse if we despair of being redeemed by Him who waits to redeem all men from all their iniquities. There is no truth of which we so profoundly need to be assured as of the unlimited compassion of Him against whom we have sinned. To know that He does not watch for our iniquities in order that He may condemn us, but in order that He may redeem us—this is life and peace. And therefore our Psalm is so valuable and precious. Its very iterations and reiterations make it beautiful and dear to us. We love it all the more because it sounds but one note, because it affirms and affirms again the very truth we most need to know. *Cox.*

We all feel—at least, if our life amounts to anything that deserves to be called an experience—that we are not what we ought to be; that we are terribly otherwise. Let us not try to get around the fact. These hearts, our own hearts, have taken in other guests than purity and honor, devotion and disinterested love. These lips, have they never displaced the honest words of charity and prayer for bitterness and mockery? These hands have been about other than the Father's business. Every day afresh we are selfish, and petulant, and censorious, and proud, and not quite sincere; our purity is not white; some duplicity creeps into our conversation; some bodily sacrilege profanes God's temple. The law is holy, just, and good. Our lives are not holy, nor just, nor good. It is nowhere written that we may partly keep that law and partly break it, and yet go acquitted. But we break it still. Suppose the past score settled by our repentance; even if the integrity of the Divine government were left unimpaired, we have no reason to think we shall be perfect men or blameless women in the future. We are painfully and shamefully certain that, after all our endeavors, we shall sin again and again. What, then, were our life without a Mediator reconciling it? What if Christ, coming in from above its broken strength, did not touch it with His inspiration, renew it by His grace, sanctify it by His love? What if He, who alone is competent, uniting both the estranged elements in His own redeeming person, did not come and take

this fallen life, and quicken it by the breathing of His Spirit, and revive its torpor by His truth, and warm its frost in His bosom, and restore its deadness by His intercession—and thus hide it again, with Himself, in God? What would it be except it were thus animated by His indwelling power, were forgiven by the pardon which no other voice on earth but His ever promised, and no other seal but His death could ever accredit? Past offences are then blotted out. The penitent passes into the disciple. Memories of transgression torment no more. So that thenceforth, Christ being formed within him, the believer might say, "This life that I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who gave Himself for me." F. D. H.

Thou hast nothing to boast of, and much to be humbled and also to be thankful for. Thy holy desires are too weak; but they are holy. Thy love has been too cold; but it is the most holy God whom thou hast loved. Thy prayers have been too dull and interrupted; but thou hast prayed for holiness and heaven. Thy labors have been too slothful; but thou hast labored for God and Christ, and the good of mankind. Though thy motion was too weak and slow, it has been Godward, and therefore it is from God. Oh, bless the Lord for frequently and remarkably fulfilling His promises in the answer of thy prayers, and in great deliverance of thyself and of many others; and that He has been preparing thee for the light of glory! And wilt thou yet doubt and fear, against all this evidence, experience, and foretaste?" *Baxter.*

We have the mind and heart and will of God revealed to us for the light, the love, the obedience of our will and heart and mind; and we should try, moment by moment, in all the bustle and stir of our daily life, to have our whole being consciously directed to and engaged with, fertilized, and calmed by contact with the perfect and infinite nature of our Father in heaven. Before all else, and in the midst of all else, we should think of that Divine mind that in the heavens is waiting to illumine our darkness; we should feel the glow of that uncreated and perfect love, which, in the midst of change and treachery, of coldness and of "greetings where no kindness is," in the midst of masterful authority and unloving command, is ready to fill our hearts with tenderness and tranquillity; we should bow before that will which is absolute and supreme indeed, but neither arbitrary nor harsh, which is "the eternal purpose that He hath purposed in Himself" indeed, but is also "the good pleasure

of His goodness and the counsel of His grace." And with such a God near to us ever in our faithful thoughts, in our thankful love, in our lowly obedience, with such a mind revealing itself to us, and such a heart opening its hidden storehouses for us as we approach, and such a

will sovereign above all, energizing, even through opposition, and making obedience a delight, what room would there be in our lives for agitations, and distractions, and regrets, and cares, and fears; what room for earthly hopes or for sad remembrances? A. M.

PSALM CXXXI.

A SONG OF ASCENTS; OF DAVID.

- 1 LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty;
Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
Or in things too wonderful for me.
2 Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul;

Like a weaned child with his mother,
My soul is with me like a weaned child.

- 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.

WHETHER written by David, to whom the title gives it, or not, this short Psalm, one of the most beautiful in the whole book, assuredly breathes David's spirit. A childlike simplicity, an unaffected humility, the honest expression of that humility as from a heart spreading itself out in conscious integrity before God—this is what we find in the Psalm, traits of a character like that of David. Delitzsch calls the Psalm an echo of David's answer to Michal (2 Sam. 6: 22), "And I will become of still less account than this, and I will be lowly in mine own eyes." At the same time, with the majority of interpreters, he holds it to be a post-exile Psalm, written with a view to encourage the writer himself and his people to the same humility, the same patient waiting upon God, of which David was so striking an example. P.

The Psalmist describes a contentment, resignation, and devotion to the Divine will, the most absolute, after lengthened struggles and temptations. The storm of passion has been allayed, all proud longings and vain expectations have been curbed. As a child at rest the poet *waits* the future which is before him, with joyous confidence in its revelations, and faithful encouragement to his people to wait with him. Nothing can be more beautiful than the sketch in the Psalm of a *new birth* to a *new life*; nothing more striking than *its guarantee* of a *better future* which the anticipated new birth holds out; nothing more suggestive of the noblest promise than the renunciation of all

selfish personal aims, and resolution of them into a prayer for the nation's weal. The short lovely song is as a bud in spring. *Ewald.*

The previous Psalm is a song of forgiveness; this a song of humility; the former celebrates the blessedness of the man whose transgressions are pardoned; the latter celebrates the blessedness of the man who is of a meek and lowly spirit. Forgiveness *should* humble us. Forgiveness implies sin; and should not the sinner clothe himself with humility? and when, not for any desert of his, but simply by the free grace of heaven, his sins have been pardoned, should he not bind the garments of humility still more closely about him? The man who is of a nature at once sincere and sweet will be even more humbled by the sense of an undeserved forgiveness than by the memory of the sins from which it has cleansed him. Very fitly, therefore, does the Psalm of humility follow the Psalm which sings of the Divine lovingkindness and tender mercy. It is the frank utterance of a soul so childlike and lowly that it *can assert its own lowliness without losing it*. Its tone is grateful, not vain-glorious. It is an appeal to the great Searcher of hearts as to the real state of the heart that speaks to Him. It is a thankful acknowledgment that He, Jehovah, has freed it from the agitations of self-will, and brought it to the rest and peace of a constant trust in Him. And this theme is wrought out with rare skill. *Coæ.*

1. He could in truth of heart appeal to God,

"Lord, my heart is not haughty." He appeal-eth to Him who knoweth all things. Lord, from whom nothing is hid, Thou knowest that this is the very disposition of my soul. God will accept the appeal; for in the account of God we are that which we sincerely desire and endeavor to be, and that which is the general course and tenor of our lives, though there be some intermixture of failing. *Manton.*

Here are three things to be noted: *The absence of the proud heart.* "Jehovah, my heart is not haughty." In the heart of the truly humble man all high thoughts of self-righteousness and all notions of self-reliance are effectually abased. He is "poor in spirit," conscious of spiritual poverty and deep need, and consequently humble before God. *The absence of the "high look."* "Nor mine eyes lofty." "Pride has its seat in the heart, and betrays itself especially in the eyes." *The absence of ambitious projects.* "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." The Psalmist did not strive with or after things that lay beyond his power or his sphere. He did not seek to *know* the mysteries of the humanly unknowable. Even if we could "understand all the mysteries and all knowledge," that would not give rest to our soul. He did not attempt to do that which was beyond his power. Rest is not attained through the efforts of daring and "vaulting ambition." *Anon.*

2. The verbs translated, "behaved," "quieted myself," suggest rather this sense: I have levelled down (toned down) and silenced my soul; I have suppressed and kept down undue aspirations, as a weaned child keeps down his natural cravings and makes himself quiet without the long enjoyed indulgence. C.—"The weaned child," writes a mother, with reference to this passage, "has for the first time become conscious of grief. The piteous longing for the sweet nourishment of his life, the broken sob of disappointment, mark the trouble of his innocent heart; it is not so much the bodily suffering; he has felt that pain before, and cried while it lasted; but now his joy and comfort are taken away, and he knows not why. When his head is once more laid upon his mother's bosom, then he trusts and loves and rests, but he has learned the first lesson of humility, he is cast down, and clings with fond helplessness to his one friend."

As a weaned child lies close to its mother, satisfied with the fact that it has its mother, his soul, which is by nature restless and craving, is stilled; it does not long after earthly enjoy-

ments and blessings, it does not desire that God should give it these; but it is satisfied with God's fellowship, it finds full satisfaction in Him. D.—Surely no figure could more forcibly express either the cost at which he gained rest, or the purity and unselfishness of the rest he gained, than this homely figure of the weaned child. When once the boy is fairly weaned, he lies still and content on his mother's bosom, no longer craving, and fretful unless his craving be satisfied. "So has it been with me," says the Psalmist. "I, too, was as one banished from God, the source of all comfort and joy. I have had to endure pain, loss, and the stings of unsatisfied desire. But, at last, my soul is weaned from all discontented thoughts, from all fretful desires for earthly good, from all selfish cravings, and waits in stillness on God, finding its satisfaction in His mere presence, resting peacefully in His arms." *Cox.*

Observe, the "child"—which is drawn for us to copy—is "weaned;" the process is complete; it has been truly disciplined; the lesson is learned; and now it rests in its "weaning." The whole image expresses a repose which follows a struggle. There has been a distress, and a battle, and a self-victory; and now the stilled will is hushed into submission and contentment; ready to forego what is most liked, and to take just whatever is given it—"a weaned child." It was a perfectly subjugated will—nevertheless, a will. And this is what is required of us; and what the nature of our manhood and the provisions of our religion have to assume. A will, decidedly a will; the more decided the will, the stronger the character, and the greater the man. But a will that is always being given up, separated, conformed, constantly, increasingly conformed. The unity of the two wills is heaven. *J. Vaughan.*

This weanedness of soul presupposes a power left in the soul of loving and desiring. It is not the destruction of its appetite, but the controlling and changing of it. A weaned child still hungers, but it hungers no more after the food that once delighted it; it is quiet without it; it can feed on other things; so a soul weaned from the world still pants much as ever for food and happiness, but it no longer seeks them in worldly objects. There is nothing in the world that it feels necessary for its happiness. This thing it loves, and that thing it values, but it knows that it can do without them, and it is ready to do without them whenever God pleases. Money, business, honor, pleasure, affection, friends, children, everything of an earthly kind that the hungry heart of man ever

delighted itself in—this weanedness of soul says of them all, “If need be, let them go.” It checks the mind in the pursuit of them, it sobers it in the enjoyment of them, it prepares it to part with them, it quiets it when they are gone. It enables a man to rejoice in them while he has them, as though he rejoiced not; and to weep for them when he loses them, as though he wept not. We may trace this weanedness of soul to various causes—if we look upward, to God working by His Spirit in our hearts; if we look around us, to worldly disappointments and afflictions; if we look within us, to the discoveries we have had made to us of the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, and the joy they have imparted to us. And may we trace it also to ourselves? to our own self-denial and efforts falling in with God’s gracious purposes? If so, it is to the glory of Jehovah’s grace, for not an effort heavenward would one of us make did not the living God constrain us. *C. Bradley.*

Blessed are those afflictions which subdue our affections, which wean us from self-sufficiency, which educate us into Christian manliness, which teach us to love God not merely when He comforts us, but even when He tries us. Well might the sacred poet repeat his figure of the weaned child; it is worthy of admiration and imitation; it is doubly desirable and difficult of attainment. Such weanedness from self springs from the gentle humility declared in the former verse, and partly accounts for its existence. If pride is gone, submission will be sure to follow; and, on the other hand, if pride is to be driven out, self must also be vanquished. *S.*

He who has longest studied the Gospel—who has risen into its strongest and purest light—and who, by broad, deep, and varied experience, has had his soul so schooled and taught as to have become proficient in the learning of the heart—he is the man who will have most about him of the humility of childhood, from his having found out for himself both the extent and limits of the human understanding. The most mature Christian will live in the exercise of the most simple faith. He who knows most of God will know most of himself; he will, therefore, believe when others doubt, and will distrust when others presume. *T. Binney.*

—Our true knowledge is to know our own ignorance. Our true strength is to know our own weakness. Our true dignity is to confess that we have no dignity, and are nobody and nothing in ourselves, and to cast ourselves down before the dignity of God, under the shadow of

whose wings and in the smile of whose countenance alone is any created being safe. Let us cling to our Father in heaven, as a child clings to his father’s hand. *C. Kingsley.*

President Edwards was no less eminent as a philosopher than as a Christian, and was versed in discriminating between what is false and what is true in religious experience. Writing of his early religious life, he says: “Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature, which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul. The soul of a true Christian appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun’s glory; rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrant; standing peacefully and lovingly in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms to drink in the light of the sun. There was no part of creature holiness that I had so great a sense of its loveliness as humility, brokenness of heart and poverty of spirit, and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this, to lie low before God, as in the dust, that I might be nothing, and that God might be all; that I might become as a little child.” And, again: “Sometimes only mentioning a single word causes my heart to burn within me, or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God. And God has appeared glorious to me on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that He subsists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate, but in a direct view of the glorious things of the Gospel.” *J. W. A.*

3. Prayer, as at the close of the last Psalm, that the experience of the individual may become the experience of the nation, that they too may learn to lie still and trust and wait, in that hope which, like faith and love, abideth forever (1 Cor. 13 : 13). *P.*

Humility is the root of hope. Hope is the blossom of meekness. The sorrows of a broken heart, the self-restraint of a meek and quiet spirit, the posture and temper of a little child—these are the forerunners and the sources of a lively hope. There are certain characteristics of hope expressed in this Psalm, which we can at once transfer to our own experience. It is

a Divine hope, "Hope in the Lord." It is a diffusive hope. The hope of the Psalmist was strong enough to quicken the hope of all around him; he sang, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." A true hope has the power of infusing itself into the heart of others. It is a practical hope. This characteristic is to be gathered out of the words "from henceforth." It is a hope that should take its start from the actual circumstances in which we are placed. It is an eternal hope. "From henceforth, even forever," is the watchword of our Psalm. Our hope should and must take the long "forever" in. It has to do with unchanging realities, with an everlasting salvation; it looks forward to unseen things; it anticipates the ultimate fulfilment and accomplishment of all things that have been spoken by holy prophets since the world began. *H. R. Reynolds.*

We all need the gift of humility now. Our hearts are haughty, and our eyes lifted up. We do too commonly busy ourselves with things too great and wonderful for us. And hence it is that we are so restless and perturbed. There is no peace but in the humility which leans on God, which trusts in Him, which confesses weakness and ignorance and guilt; which is not ashamed to say, "I do not know," "I cannot tell;" which rejoices not in the faults and defects of others, but rejoices in whatever is true in them and good and kind. Only as we recover the spirit of a little child, of a weaned child, and rest in simple, lowly faith in God shall we enter into the peace which passeth all understanding. *Cox.*

It is only when we begin to *think* about life, and how we should live, that the art of being quiet assumes its real value. It removes what

De Quincey calls "the burden of that distraction which lurks in the infinite littleness of details." It is the infinite littleness of details which takes the glory and the dignity from our common life, and which we who value that life for its own sake and for the sake of its great Giver must strive to make finite. The art of being quiet is necessary to enable a man to possess his own soul in peace and integrity—to examine himself, to understand what gifts God has endowed him with, and to consider how he may best employ them in the business of the world. This is its universal utility. It is unwholesome activity which requires not repose and thoughtful quiet as its forerunner, and every man should secure some portion of each day for voluntary retirement and repose within himself. *Chambers's Journal.*

It is good to prepare the thoughts in gentleness and silence for the consideration of duty. Silence as well as gentleness would seem beloved of God. For to the human sense, and like the mighty manifestation of a serene lesson, the skies and the great spaces between the stars are silent. Silent, too, for the most part, is earth, save where gentle sounds vary the quiet of the country and the fluctuating solitudes of the waters. Folly and passion are rebuked before it; peace loves it, and hearts are drawn together by it, conscious of one service and of one duty of sympathy. Violence is partial and transitory; gentleness alone is universal and ever sure. *Leigh Hunt.*

It is the quiet, unheralded lives that are building up the kingdom of heaven. Not much note is taken of them here. Their monuments will not make much show in the churchyard. Their names will not be passed down to posterity with many wreaths about them. But they are God's favorites. Their work is blessed. *Anon.*

PSALM CXXXII.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

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| <p>1 LORD, remember for David
All his affliction ;
2 How he sware unto the LORD
And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob :
3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of
my house,
Nor go up into my bed ;
4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids ;
5 Until I find out a place for the LORD,
A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob.</p> <p>6 Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah :
We found it in the field of the wood.
7 We will go into his tabernacles ;
We will worship at his footstool.
8 Arise, O LORD, into thy resting place ;
Thou, and the ark of thy strength.
9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness ;
And let thy saints shout for joy.
10 For thy servant David's sake
Turn not away the face of thine anointed.</p> | <p>11 The LORD hath sworn unto David in truth ;
He will not turn from it :
Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy
throne.
12 If thy children will keep my covenant
And my testimony that I shall teach them,
Their children also shall sit upon thy throne
for evermore.
13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion ;
He hath desired it for his habitation.</p> <p>14 This is my resting place for ever :
Here will I dwell ; for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provision :
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
16 Her priests also will I clothe with salva-
tion :
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
17 There will I make the horn of David to bud :
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
18 His enemies will I clothe with shame :
But upon himself shall his crown flourish.</p> |
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THIS Psalm is a prayer that God's promises made to David may not fail of fulfilment, that He will dwell forever in the habitation which He chose for Himself in Zion, and that the children of David may forever sit upon His throne. It opens with a recital of David's efforts to bring the ark to its resting-place ; it ends with a recital of the promises made to David and to his seed. There has been much difference of opinion as to the occasion for which the Psalm was written. P.

The Temple in Jerusalem was itself a prophecy. The true abiding-place of God, the true meeting-place of God and man, the true seat of the oracle, the true place of the real sacrifice, was the Temple of Christ's body. The anointed king in the holy hill of Zion was a prophecy. The true Son of David, the everlasting King, is Jesus the Anointed. Then, again, the New Testament teaches that besides this one real Temple, Christ Himself, He is building through all the ages an habitation for God—the Church. Hence our Psalm has been universally and wisely applied to the Church of these Christian days, and its invocations and promises claimed as ex-

pressive of the desires and confidences of Christian people in their work for God. We are God's building, and we are God's builders too. The Psalm is full of strength and encouragement for us in both characters. We may call it the Song of the Builders. It falls into two parts—man's and God's. In the former (vs. 1-10) we have the toil that went before the completion of the Temple, and the prayer for the Divine blessing on it, now that it is complete. In the latter we have God's answer, guaranteed by His oath, corresponding to and surpassing all the petitions of the prayers. A. M.

1. *Remember, O Jehovah, for David, all his affliction.* This Psalm contains a commemoration of David's zeal for the house of God (vs. 1-9), and a prayer that it may be rewarded by the fulfilment of the promise to him and to his house (vs. 10-18). The common version (*remember David and all his afflictions*) omits a preposition and inserts a conjunction, both without necessity. The precise sense is *his being afflicted*. The distress referred to is the great anxiety which David felt, first to reunite the

ark and tabernacle, and then to build a more permanent sanctuary. This zeal for the house of God is one of the most characteristic features in the history of David, and for this he was rewarded not only with a promise that his son should execute his favorite design, but also with a promise that God would build a house for him, by granting a perpetual succession in his family upon the throne of Judah. A.

3. *Tent of my house, i.e., "the tent which is my house"* (as in the next clause, "the couch which is my bed"), a good instance of the way in which the associations of the old patriarchal tent-life fixed themselves in the language of the people. P.

6. *We heard of it at Ephratah.* The only explanation, equally agreeable to usage and the context, is that which makes Ephratah the ancient name of Bethlehem (Gen. 48:7), here mentioned as the place where David spent his youth, and where he used to hear of the ark, although he never saw it till long afterward, when he found it in the fields of the wood, in the neighborhood of *Kirjath-jearim*, which name means Forest-town, or City of the Woods. A.

6-8. On the whole, whichever interpretation we adopt, the general scope of the passage seems to be, Remember Thy servant David: remember all his efforts to build Thee an habitation for Thy name; he gave himself no rest till he had brought the ark to Zion. We heard where the ark was; we went to fetch it, saying one to another as we brought it to its new abode, "Let us come into His dwelling," etc. And now, by the memory of David, by the memory of Thy covenant with him and his faithfulness to that covenant, we plead with Thee. Reject not the prayer of our king, who is David's son; grant him the request of his lips, fulfil all his desires. P.

7-9. By a sudden transition the ark is supposed to be brought to its destined home and all is ready for worship. Pertinent now is the solemn public prayer that God Himself would arise and come into this place of His abiding rest—the seat of His visible presence (the Shekinah) being above the mercy-seat, upon the lid of the ark of the covenant and underneath the cherubim. The words of this prayer are those used by Solomon at the dedication of the first temple when he came precisely to this point—the consecration of the ark and the prayerful invocation of God's presence to abide there (2 Chr. 6:41), "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of Thy strength; let thy priests, O Lord God,

be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness." C.

8, 9. The Psalmist asks first that God would dwell in the completed Temple, and that the symbol of His presence may now at last, after so many wanderings, rest there. It had journeyed before the people in their wilderness marches. It had been planted in Shiloh, and had deserted that sanctuary which He once loved. It had tarried for a while at Mizpeh and at Bethel. It had been lost on the fatal field of Aphek. It had been carried in triumph through Philistine cities, and had been sent back in their terror. It had lain for three months in the house of Obed-edom. For twenty years it had been hidden in Kirjath. It had been brought up with song and dance to David's house, and now it stands in the holy place. There may it abide, and go no more out. He prays that the priests may be not merely in name and office, nor in symbolical attire, but in inmost reality, clothed with righteousness, may be pure and good as their office demands, and not, like the miserable sons of Eli, who had lost the ark at Eben-ezer, robed in violence and crime. He prays that the gathered Israel may receive such communications of God's love that their hearts and their lips may be filled with joy. And he prays, as at the beginning of the Psalm, that the memory of David may avail to bring down answers of peace to the prayer of David's son. May we not from all this draw a needful lesson for ourselves as to the one great blessing which all builders for God should desire. To be filled with God, to be pure and good, to be glad and jubilant, to have perpetual access with prayers to His mercy-seat, and large answers to the God-pleasing petitions—these are the true notes of the Church, and of the individual Christian man. What do we desire most for our brethren and for ourselves? Is the sum of all our hopes and wishes for both gathered in the one mighty petition, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength?" Do we see all other gifts wrapped up in that? Do we long for it, in the firm confidence that when He comes He will bring all that we need, that His indwelling, and it alone, at once constitutes His Church, and endows her with power, purity, and gladness; while it secures that all her work shall prosper, and that the house, which she builds for God, shall stand forevermore?

9. The Psalm prays that the priests may be clothed with *righteousness*. In the new Israel, as in the first constitution of the old, all the people are priests. Righteousness, then, is to

be the robe of every Christian soul. Now, do not lose the force of this petition by thinking that "righteousness" is a hazy theological virtue, having little to do with every-day life, and small resemblance to secular morality. To be good, to be gentle and just, loving and truthful, self-forgetting and self-ruling, honest and true, kind and helpful, to live in the exercise of the virtues, which the consciences and tongues of all men call lovely and of good report, and to add to them all the consecration of reference to Him in whom these parted graces dwell united and complete—this is to be righteous, as the Psalmist conceived of it. The Gospel has taught us yet deeper thoughts associated with the Word. Thank God for that "fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness" with which Christ covers our wounded nakedness. It becomes ours, though no thread of it was wrought in our looms. But remember that growing purity in life and deed is the main proof that Christ's righteousness is indeed ours. If we are to do God's work in the world, we must be good, true, righteous men. That robe, like the silken vest in which the knight, in the old legend, went forth to fight, is our true mail. It will turn blows, and deaden cuts, and stay thrusts that will dint and shear through and pierce every other defence. Be you equipped with the armor of righteousness, and wear for all your protection the white robes of God's priests. Be you armed with the weapons of righteousness, and use, for your assaults on evil, mainly a holy life. There is none other in all the armory like it. The true power of the Christian soldier lies in character, character, character! A. M.

And let Thy saints shout for joy.

Holiness and happiness go together. The sentence, while it may read as a permit, is also a precept; saints are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. Happy religion which makes it a duty to be glad! Where righteousness is the clothing, joy may well be the occupation. S.

10. The frequency with which God is urged to hear and answer prayer for *David's sake* is not to be explained by making *David* mean the promise to David, nor from the personal favor of which he was the object, but from his historical position as the great theocratical model, in whom it pleased God that the old economy should reach its culminating point, and who is always held up as the type and representative of the Messiah, so that all the intervening kings are mere connecting links, and their reigns mere repetitions and continuations of the reign of David, with more or less resemblance as they

happened to be good or bad. Hence the frequency with which his name appears in the later Scriptures, compared with even the best of his successors, and the otherwise inexplicable transfer of that name to the Messiah Himself. It is in this unique character and office, as the servant of the Lord, that David is here mentioned, first by his own name, and then as the Anointed King of Israel, whose face Jehovah is entreated not to turn away, a figure for refusing him an audience, or at least denying his petition, which we know to have been used in David's times. A.

11. The Lord hath sworn. That this is a prophecy of the Messiah, we have the authority of Peter (Acts 2:30). This promise to David occurs (2 Sam. 7:12) and hath a two-fold sense, relating to Solomon in type and shadow, to Christ in truth and substance. *Bishop Horne.*

12. Forevermore. The temporal kingdom of David continued in the line of David till the birth of Christ, when the spiritual kingdom commenced in the person of this Son of David, of which there shall be no end. *Dimock.*—The kingdom of Judah might have stood to this day had its kings been faithful to the Lord. No internal revolt or external attack could have overthrown the royal house of David; it fell by its own sin, and by nothing else. The Lord was continually provoked, but He was amazingly longsuffering, for long after seceding Israel had gone into captivity, Judah still remained. Miracles of mercy were shown to her. Divine patience exceeded all limits, for the Lord's regard for David was exceeding great. The princes of David's house seemed set on ruining themselves, and nothing could save them; justice waited long, but it was bound at last to unsheathe the sword and strike. Still, if in the letter man's breach of promise caused the covenant to fail, yet in spirit and essence the Lord has been true to it, for Jesus reigns and holds the throne forever. David's seed is still royal, for he was the progenitor according to the flesh of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. S.

14-18. In Zion, His chosen and dearly beloved dwelling-place, Jehovah blesses whatever belongs to the necessities of her temporal life, so that her poor do not suffer want, for Divine love loves the poor in an altogether special manner. His second blessing concerns the priests, for through these He will hold communion with His people. He makes the priesthood of Zion a real saving institution; He clothes her priests with salvation, so that they

do not merely mediate it instrumentally, but possess it personally, and their whole appearance is one that proclaims salvation. And to all her saints He gives cause and matter for great and lasting joy, inasmuch as not only in word but also in deeds of grace He acknowledges the Church, in which He has taken up His abode. There in Zion is indeed the kingship of promise, the kingship to which the fulfilment cannot be wanting. To the house of David, which David, as its ancestor, and the anointed of God, who is reigning at the time, represent, He will make a horn to sprout; He has set in order a lamp for it, which shall never be extinguished. D.

14. This is My rest forever. Of the Christian Church we may affirm with undoubtedly certainty, that it is *God's rest forever*; after this dispensation of His will there will never succeed another; Christianity closes and completes the Divine communication from God to man; nothing greater, nothing better can or will be imparted to him on this side eternity; and even in heaven itself we shall, through an everlasting duration, be employed in contemplating and adoring the riches of that grace, the brightest glories of which have been realized in the consummations of Calvary, the ascension of the Messiah, the breaking down of all national peculiarity, and the gift and mission of the Divine Spirit. *Morison.*

Christian faith is a grand cathedral, with divinely pictured windows. Standing without you see no glory, nor can possibly imagine any. Nothing is visible but the merest outline of dusky shapes. Standing within all is clear and defined, every ray of light reveals an army of unspeakable splendors. *Ruskin.*

14-16. God's presence is an earnest of all good; for all this follows upon "*here will I dwell.*" By it He giveth meat to the hungry, and comfort to the poor, even the Bread of Life to the believing and repenting soul; by it He Himself is the sanctification of His priests, and His righteousness and salvation is their most glorious vesture; and by His presence He maketh His elect ever glad, filling their hearts with joy and their mouths with songs. *Burton.*

It is necessary for some people to remember that cheerfulness, good spirits, light heartedness, merriment, are not unchristian nor unsaintly. We do not please God more by eating bitter aloes than by eating honey. A cloudy, foggy, rainy day is not more heavenly than a day of sunshine. A funeral march is not so much like the music of angels as the songs of birds on a May morning. It was not the pleas-

ant things in the world that came from the devil, and the dreary things from God; it was "sin brought death into the world and all our woe;" as the sin vanishes, the woe will vanish too. God Himself is the ever-blessed God. He dwells in the light of joy as well as of purity, and instead of becoming more like Him as we become more miserable, and as all the brightness and glory of life are extinguished, we become more like God as our blessedness becomes more complete. The great Christian graces are radiant with happiness. Faith, hope, charity—there is no sadness in them—and if penitence makes the heart sad, penitence belongs to the sinner, not to the saint; as we become more saintly, we have less sin to sorrow over. No, the religion of Christ is not a religion of sorrow. It consoles wretchedness and brightens with a Divine glory the lustre of every inferior joy. It attracts to itself the broken-hearted, the lonely, the weary, the despairing, but it is to give them rest, comfort, and peace. It rekindles hope; it inspires strength, courage, and joy. It checks the merriment of the thoughtless who have never considered the graver and more awful realities of man's life and destiny, but it is to lead them through transient sorrow to deeper and more perfect blessedness, even in this world, than they had ever felt before the sorrow came. *Dale.*

Christian, what ill news hath Christ brought from heaven with Him, that makes thee walk with thy folded arms and pensive countenance? To see a wicked man merry or a Christian sad is alike uncomely. "A feast is made for laughter," saith Solomon. I am sure God intended His people's joy in the feast of the Gospel; mourners were not to sit at God's table (Deut. 26). Truly the saint's heaviness reflects unkindly upon God Himself; we do not commend his cheer, if it doth not cheer us. O Christians, let the world see you are not losers in your joy since you have been acquainted with the Gospel; give not them cause to think by your uncomfortable walking, that when they turn Christians, they must bid all joy farewell, and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning. *Gurnall.*

17, 18. "I have arranged" (put in order) "a lamp for mine anointed," referring to the lamps kept in order by the priests in the temple. This usage seems to furnish the figure; its significance comes from the relation between *light* and *truth*, so that this signifies the light of salvation which the Messiah sheds forth on a morally dark world. Glorious victory shall be his reward; his enemies clothed with the shame

of overthrow and defeat ; his own crown flourishing in perpetual beauty and glory. The figure here follows that in v. 17, the horn shooting up as a vegetable growth, so the crown puts forth blossoms and flowers of celestial beauty. C.

14-18. Notice that each single petition is enlarged in the answer to something much greater than itself. The Church asked God to arise into His rest ; and He answers by adding the promise of perpetuity : " This is My rest forever ; here will I dwell." He adds a blessing not sought when He promises abundance for all, and bread to fill even her poor. The Church asked for robes of righteousness for the priests ; and He replies with robes of *salvation*, which is the perfecting and most glorious issue of righteousness. The Church asked that the people might shout for joy ; and He replies with an emphatic reduplication of the word, which implies the *exuberance* and *continuance* of the joyful acclaim. The Church asked for favor to the king ; and He replies by the promise that the horn of his power shall continually increase, that light of guidance and gladness shall be always his, that victory over all his enemies shall attend his arm, and an ever-blossoming crown be on his head. Put this in its widest form, and what does it come to but that great law of His grace, by which He over-answers all our poor desires, and giving us more than we had expected, shames us out of our distrust ? And this law holds for us in all our works and in all our prayers. These transcendent answers belong to us as truly as they did to the waiting multitude, who thronged the courts of the temple. We have work to do for God, and the courses of the walls of His house are but rising yet. The true builder is that greater than Solomon, of whom it was written long ago, " Behold the Man whose Name is the Branch—He shall build the Temple of the Lord, even He shall build the Temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory." The day shall come when the weary work of the ages shall be accomplished, and the glory of the Lord shall fill that wondrous house. Here we ask that God would dwell with us, and there " the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and God Himself shall walk in them." Here we ask for righteousness as our garment, and there it shall be granted us to be arrayed in " fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." In that tabernacle that shall not be taken down, see that you build on the one foundation some gold and silver and precious stones, which the declaring day and the

revealing fire shall manifest to have been wrought in God. Then our work, abiding, shall bring to us the endless glory with which God at last overpays the toils, even as now He over-answers the poor prayers of His laboring servants. A. M.

Thus the song reminds us how God meets and outdoes our requests, and is ever more ready to give than we are to ask. It speaks to us of Him who was at once David's Son and Lord, the true " horn" and " lamp"—that is, the light and strength of the world. The seed of David no longer occupies a throne, if Christ be not the promised " seed." There is no longer a Temple, a place in which God and man may meet and rest and dwell together, if Christ be not at once Temple and Ark, Oracle and Sacrifice. The " Anointed One" who reigns forever, and whose crown still " blossoms" into new vigor and beauty, is, must be, He whom we call the *Christ* or Anointed One of God. And, therefore, grand as the Psalm was when it was first sung by the Levitical choirs, full as it was of glorious and pathetic memories to the later pilgrims who went up to Zion, it has reserved its fulness of meaning and the excellence of its glory for us, if only we have found the Son of God in that Son of Man who was " of the house and lineage of David." Coz.

It is no marvel that the literature of a nation whose chief bond of national union was the law should have been intensely patriotic ; for the nation possessed the noblest and the truest incentive to patriotism ; and in its literature this patriotism found an utterance that is unrivalled elsewhere in any language. *The hill of Zion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King. God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge. The city of the Lord of hosts, the city of our God* (Psalm 48 : 2, 3, 8). *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined* (Psalm 50 : 2). *Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself. Oh, pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake I will wish thee prosperity ; yea, because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek to do thee good* (Psalm 122 : 3, 6-9). Can anything be more beautiful ? Can anything be more eloquent ? The Psalmist was the most ardent of patriots, because his country was the chosen of God. Therefore he could

say, *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God* (Psalm 86 : 2, 3). "*The Lord hath chosen Zion to be a habitation for Himself; He hath longed for her. This is My rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein*" (Psalm 132 : 14, 15). And in this revelation was the ultimate fulfilment of the earlier promise of the law, *There shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to*

cause His name to dwell there (Deut. 12 : 11). Thus every portion of this ancient literature is intimately bound up with every other. The prophecy with the poetry, and the poetry with the history, and all together with the law, and the law of Moses is not only an integral element in the composition of the Old Testament, but is also the corner-stone of its internal structure, and the firm, essential basis of its organic and indestructible unity. *S. Leathes.*

PSALM CXXXIII.

A SONG OF ASCENTS; OF DAVID.

1 BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity !
2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard ;

That came down upon the collar of his garments ;
3 Like the dew of Hermon,
That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion :
For there the LORD commanded the blessing,
Even life for evermore.

HERDER says of this exquisite little song, that "it has the fragrance of a lovely rose." Nowhere has the nature of true unity—that unity which binds men together not by artificial restraints, but as brethren of one heart—been more faithfully described, nowhere has it been so gracefully illustrated, as in this short ode. True concord is, we are here taught, a holy thing, a sacred oil, a rich perfume, which, flowing down from the head to the beard, from the beard to the garment, sanctifies the whole body. It is a sweet morning dew, which lights not only on the lofty mountain-peaks, but on the lesser hills, embracing all, and refreshing all with its influence.

The title of the Psalm gives it to David. But in truth there is not a syllable in the Psalm which can lead us to any conclusion respecting its date. Such a vision of the blessedness of unity may have charmed the poet's heart and inspired the poet's song, at any period of the national history. And his words, though originally, no doubt, intended to apply to a state, would be equally true of a smaller circle, a family or a tribe. P.

1. By general consent of lexicographers and

critics, the Hebrew words translated "together in unity" mean *together in place*, and leave unity in feeling and spirit to be inferred. The writer must be supposed to think of the great religious festivals which brought the masses of the people together for the delightful service of public religious worship. This service was morally and politically wholesome ; it was socially delightful to the whole people, old and young ; it could scarcely fail to exert a precious religious influence upon all. The bringing of the whole people together in one place during these great festivals served to bring their hearts together in fraternal union. C.

This is one of those bursts of feeling the truth and beauty of which every human heart at once acknowledges. Separation, isolation, discord, are unnatural and inhuman. To appreciate as it deserves this rich gift of God, we must look at it in family life. The words suggest to us at once the picture not of a nation or of a numerous society, but of a family. We seem to hear the voice of an elder brother, whose heart cannot contain itself for thankfulness at the sight of peaceful family union. Something has stirred his spirit to detect the greatness of

that blessing which has perhaps been interrupted or too long unconsciously enjoyed. *H. M. Butler.*

Pleasant. The same word which is used here for "*pleasant*" is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music ; for the pleasantness of a cornfield ; for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the cornfield, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion ; and all this to discover the pleasantness, profitableness, and sweetness of the saints' agreement. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves. *W. Bridge.*

There is nothing that would render the true religion more lovely or make more proselytes to it than to see the professors of it tied together with the heartstrings of love. If God be one, let all that profess Him be of one mind and one heart, and thus fulfil Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one." *T. Watson.*—In church fellowship we can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity. Oneness of life, truth, and way ; oneness in Christ Jesus ; oneness of object and spirit—these we must have, or our assemblies will be synagogues of contention rather than churches of Christ. The closer the unity the better ; for the more of the good and the pleasant there will be. Christian unity is good in itself, good for ourselves, good for the brethren, good for the outside world ; and for certain it is pleasant ; for a loving heart must have pleasure and give pleasure in associating with others of like nature. A church united for years in earnest service of the Lord is a well of goodness and joy to all those who dwell round about it. *S.*

The great law is, work together if you would work with strength. To separate ourselves from our brethren is to lose power. Why, half-dead brands heaped close will kindle one another, and flame will sparkle beneath the film of white ashes on their edges. Fling them apart and they go out. Rake them together and they glow. Let us try not to be little feeble tapers, stuck in separate sockets, and each twinkling struggling rays over some inch or so of space ; but draw near to our brethren, and be workers together with them, that there may rise a glorious flame from our summed and collective brightness which shall be a guide and hospitable call to many a wandering and weary spirit. *A. M.*

2. The first figure is taken from the oil which was poured on the head of the high-priest at his consecration. The point of the comparison does not lie in the *preciousness* of the oil, or in its *all-pervading fragrance* ; but in this, that being poured on the head, it did not rest there ; but flowed to the beard and descended even to the garments, and thus, as it were, consecrated the whole body in all its parts. *All the members participate in the same blessing.* This is the point of the comparison. Other thoughts may be suggested by it, as that the spirit of concord, both in a state and in a family, will descend from those who govern to those who are governed ; or, again, that concord is a holy thing, like the holy oil, or that it is sweet and fragrant, like the fragrant oil ; but these are mere accessories of the image. *P.*—The point of the comparison is the uniting power of brotherliness, as that which inwardly unites those who are locally the farthest apart from one another, and also brings them externally together. When brethren united in harmonious love also unite locally, as is done in Israel at the great feasts, then it is as when the holy, precious chrism upon Aaron's head—the chrism that breathes forth the blended odor of many spices—trickles down upon his beard, which flows down far over the upper border of his robe. It then becomes clearly perceptible and even outwardly visible, that Israel far and near is permeated by one spirit and bound together in unity of spirit. *D.*

The precious oil ; literally, the good oil, the sacred oil, for the preparation of which special directions were given, and which was to be devoted exclusively to the consecration of holy things and persons (Ex. 30 : 22, 33). Hence the image implies not only the whole body is united, but that the whole body is *consecrated*. *Aaron*, named not because he only was thus anointed, but as the representative of all priestly anointing. *P.*—In the consecration of the Aaronic order, the *inferior* priests were only *sprinkled* with this oil mixed with the blood of the sacrifice, but in the unction of the High Priest the oil was so *copiously poured forth* as to "run down upon the beard and even to the skirts of his garments." This was because it pointed to him who received the Spirit "without measure." He was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows ;" *i.e.*, above those who possessed with him a *fellowship* or similarity of office, as types of himself. Aaron was anointed high priest ; Saul was anointed king ; Elisha was anointed prophet ; Melchizedek, king and priest ; Moses, priest and prophet ;

David, king and prophet; yet none was ever anointed to the joint possession of all these dignities together save the *Christ* of God, the anti-type of them all. *Christians* derive the name of *Christians* from their profession of *Christ*, and the nature and character of *Christians* from their union to *Christ*. It is their peculiar privilege and distinguishing joy "to have the *unction* from the Holy One, and to know all things" that are necessary for them to know. *Bush*.

3. The second image expressive of the blessing of brotherly concord is taken from the dew. Here, again, it is not the *refreshing* nature of the dew, nor its *gentle, all-pervading* influence which is the prominent feature. That which renders it to the poet's eye so striking an image of brotherly concord is the fact that *it falls alike on both mountains*; that the same dew which descends on the lofty Hermon descends also on the humbler Zion. High and low drink in the same sweet refreshment. Thus the image is exactly parallel to the last; the oil descends from the head to the beard, the dew from the higher mountain to the lower. (Hermon in the north, and Zion in the south, may also further suggest the union of the northern and southern tribes.) P.—This is one of the most beautiful images in the Psalter, an illustration of the blessings of unity, drawn by one who had looked upon the mountains with the eye of a poet, as well as upon the sanctuary with the eye of a saint. *Bishop Alexander*.

As the sacred oil sanctified the whole body, so by the single ministry of the dew the whole land was united and blessed, each province serving the other; and, in like manner, love is the uniting and sanctifying force of life. It overpasses all lines of demarkation, all social gulfs and barriers. At once bond and benediction, it draws all aims and interests to a common centre, in which they blend and multiply and grow strong. *Coar*.

Hermon must not be thought of as a mere peak. It is a mountain-range, substantially distinct, yet forming a part of the anti-Lebanon, and extending thirty miles, in a crescent of snow-capped mountains, from the southwest to the northeast. You journey beside it from morning to evening, and at night camp at Kefr-Hauwar with its white ridge resting on the dark sky and illumining your northern horizon. From this long, crescent-shaped ridge mountain-ribs jut out, declining to hills as they near the plain. These ribs you cross in making your way south of Hermon from Baniâs to Damascus. *Dulles*.—Hermon itself, although its peak was scarcely within the limits of the Holy

Land, yet, as its southern, eastern, and western slopes were shared by the three tribes of Dan, Naphtali, and Manassah, must be considered a mountain of Palestine, of which it was the northwestern boundary. It is the culminating point of the anti-Lebanon range, the watershed east of Jordan, and which, in its prolongation, forms the mountain ranges of Bashan, Gilead, and Moab. It towers into the region of perpetual snow, between nine and ten thousand feet above the sea, and worthily holds the name of "Jebel esh Sheikh," *the chief mountain*; not quite so lofty, indeed, as the summit of Lebanon, but, with its isolated white-tipped cone, far grander in appearance. Its name *Hermon* signifies "lofty peak." The expression, "the dew of Hermon," seems to have been proverbial, and is well explained by facts. Hermon, unlike most other mountains, springs from its base at once. It is more than ten thousand feet above the sunken valley of the Jordan from which it rises, and which seethes in a tropical heat. The vapors exhaled by the sun from the vast swamps of Huleh rise during the day to the higher regions, and, congealed by the snows of the mountain, descend nightly in most copious distillation, saturating everything on its sides. *Tristram*.

"The dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion" is now become quite clear to me. Here as I sat at the foot of Hermon, I understood how the water-drops which rose from its forest-mantled heights, and out of the highest ravines, which are filled the whole year round with snow, after the sun's rays have attenuated them and moistened the atmosphere with them, descend at evening-time as a heavy dew upon the lower mountains which lie round about as its spurs. One ought to have seen Hermon with its white-golden crown glistening aloft in the blue sky, in order to be able rightly to understand the figure. Nowhere in the whole country is so heavy a dew perceptible as in the districts near to Hermon. *Van De Velde*.

We had sensible proof at Rasheiya of the copiousness of the "*dew of Hermon*." Unlike most other mountains which gradually rise from lofty table lands and often at a distance from the sea, Hermon starts at once to the height of nearly ten thousand feet, from a platform scarcely above the sea-level. This platform, too—the upper Jordan valley, and marshes of Merom—is for the most part an impenetrable swamp of unknown depth, whence the seething vapor, under the rays of an almost tropical sun, is constantly ascending into the upper atmosphere during the day. The vapor, coming in

contact with the snowy sides of the mountain, is rapidly congealed, and is precipitated in the evening in the form of a dew, the most copious we ever experienced. It penetrated everywhere and saturated everything. The floor of our tent was soaked, our bed was covered with it, our guns were dripping, and dewdrops hung about everywhere. No wonder that the foot of Hermon is clad with orchards and gardens of such marvellous fertility in this land of droughts.

Tristram.

The Lord commanded the blessing. Where love reigns God reigns. Where love wishes blessing, there God commands the blessing. This makes Christian brotherhood so good and pleasant; it has Jehovah's blessing resting upon it, and it cannot be otherwise than sacred like "the precious ointment," and heavenly like "the dew of Hermon." S.

Even life for evermore. "*The gift of God,*" says the apostle, "*is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Consider what this life includes and what it is. As the initial element, it includes the remission of all the guilt of sin, past and to come; the absolute removal of already incurred condemnation, and the cleansing of the soul from sin's defiling effects. Sin, the occasion of condemnation, and so the source of death—sin, with all its effects, must first be removed. Its condemning power must be annulled, its dominion must be broken, its defiling effects must be counteracted. All these results are wrought completely for and in the believing, saved soul by the blood of Christ. And as death is thus taken away, so also life is wrought in the soul—life, whose essential principle is holiness, is wrought by the Spirit of Christ. Holiness, conformity of mind and heart with God, is established in the soul as its ruling principle; ruling through this life, though subject to sharp and severe conflict with the old self-asserting lusts, aided by the world's attractions and Satan's influences. Thus, in every soul that simply receives and rests upon Christ, that accepts His blood as justifying and His Spirit as renewing unto holiness, thus *eternal life is begun*. By the one justifying act of Christ, performed for the soul at the moment of its receiving Him, that soul is forever after released from condemnation, raised from spiritual death. By the one quickening act of the Spirit of Christ, the soul begins a life of holiness, is introduced into spiritual conformity and likeness to God, as its *forever-abiding condition*. That soul may, indeed, sin through all the days that it remains in the body, but never again can its sins bring it under the juris-

diction of the *law*, under its condemnation of death. It may, indeed, be tempted to sin, but the Omnipotent energy that has begotten it unto the life of holiness will recover and deliver it again; will enable it to hold on in its struggle with and give it victory after victory over the evil. And in the end, when it is sundered from the flesh through which all its temptations come, the soul's eternal life is *perfected*. Its union and communion with God is from thenceforth personal and perfect. Its conformity of thought and feeling, its likeness to God in character and in every movement of the spirit, is absolute and complete. And this intimate, endearing fellowship, this immaculate holiness, is its state of blessedness forever! And this eternal life, begun in the soul here and perfected hereafter, this *eternal life*, with its consummate satisfaction of blessedness, *is the gift of God!* It is the free donation of His sovereign grace, offered in the abounding riches of His mercy to *every one who will receive it* by faith in His Son Christ Jesus. B.

We must learn to love the unselfish Christ before we can love selfish men. We must learn to love the perfect Christ before we can love imperfect men. No man, save only Christ, ever did love men altogether as they should be loved. And we shall gain a true love for them only as we love Him, and, by love for Him, are transformed into His likeness. Only as the mind of Christ dwells in us shall we rise to the love which is like the sacred oil that ran down Aaron's beard, like the gentle dew with which Hermon, out of its abundance, blessed the craving slopes of Zion, the love which is more holy than priest or mountain, which is the sweetness of life on earth, and the germ and power and blessedness of life forevermore. *Coa.*

Eternal life also is to know God, and God is love. This is Christ's own definition. Ponder it. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." Love must be eternal. It is what God is. On the last analysis, then, love is life. Love never faileth, and life never faileth so long as there is love. No worse fate can befall a man in this world than to live and grow old alone, unloving and unloved. To be lost is to live in an unregenerate condition, loveless and unloved; and to be saved is to love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth already in God. For God is love. *H. Drummond.*

Unity and peace is said to be like the dew of Hermon, that descended upon Zion, where the

Lord promised His blessing. Divisions run religions into briars and thorns, contentions and parties. Divisions are to churches like wars in countries; where war is, the ground lieth waste and untilled; none takes care of it. It is love that edifieth, but division pulleth down. Divisions are as the northeast wind to the fruits, which causeth them to dwindle away to nothing; but when the storms are over, everything begins to grow. When men are divided, they seldom speak the truth in love; and then, no marvel, they grow not up to Him in all things which is the Head. It is a sad presage of an approaching famine, not of bread nor water, but of hearing the Word of God when our controversies about doubtful things and things of less moment eat up our zeal for the more indisputable and practical things in religion. *Bunyan*.—Satan gains very much by the disunion of Christian hearts, and the falling out of those which have given their names to religion; and therefore he leaves no way of temptation unattempted to set such at odds. He labors mightily, and prodigiously prevails at this day, by vexing their judgments with opinionativeness, self-conceited speculations, and thoughts of separation, to drive them by degrees from divorce of judgments in some singular apprehensions to disaffection; from disaffection to faction, from faction to schism, from schism (to speak in softest phrase) to many dreadful distempers. *R. Bolton*.

Christian brethren, surely we have this reason for unity. Many unfriendly eyes mark our strifes. They give great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. And the enemy takes the occasion. The bitter enmities, the groundless and deplorable schisms, in the Church of Christ, form a stock commonplace on the lips of the enemies of our holy faith. The outer world, too, is always ready to set the stumbling or failure of any professed believer to the discredit of all. And such, in its essential nature, is all contention, that it is quite impossible to engage in it without throwing down some of the fences which guard us against our spiritual foes, our ensnaring temptations. Angry and vindictive feeling; unfairness and untruthfulness; the arts of misrepresentation, and the arms of intimidation where that is possible; the eyes shut against light, whether from argument or information—shut sometimes unconsciously, sometimes half consciously, sometimes quite consciously; these are the kind of things that come of falling out by the way among Christians. *Boyd*.

Surely there is no better way to stop the ris-

ing of new sects and schisms than to reform abuses, to compound the smaller differences; to proceed mildly, and not with sanguinary persecutions; and rather to take off the principal authors by winning and advancing them, than to enrage them by violence and bitterness. *Bacon*.—Our Lord is repeating down through all time the rebuke He gave to the uncharitableness of John, and the one-sidedness of Martha, and the murmurs of His disciples—is teaching us to look with an approving eye on every honest effort to do good, and to take pleasure in the wide variety of human character and Christian grace. *Ker*.

The pulse quickens and the eyes fill with tears at the bare thought of this vision of peace, at this distant but blessed prospect of a reunited Church. What dark doubts would it not dispel! What deep consolations would it not shed forth on millions of souls! What fascination would not the spectacle of concordant prayer and harmonious action among the servants of Christ exert over the hearts of sinners! With what majestic energy would the reinvigorated Church address herself forthwith to the heartier promotion of man's best interests, to the richer development of the Christian life, to more energetic labors for the conversion of the world! *H. P. L.*

Though the Church of Christ has rent its own unity, we can see what may be called the breadth of view of the Great Head, in that He does not identify Himself with their narrowness, nor confine His reviving influences to any one portion where His truth remains. The showers of His grace come from too high a source to be limited by the walls they build against each other. *Ker*.

The kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal. It accepts all comers, irrespective of race, or caste, or sex. It has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and every place alike are holy; above all, it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength. This, then, is the Christian ideal: a holy season extending the whole year round; a temple confined only by the limits of the habitable world;

a priesthood co-extensive with the human race.
Bishop Lightfoot.

Heaven, the upper-world Church, is *Society Organized*; and the Church below, *Society Organizing*—both in fact one, as regards their final end or object, and the properties and principles in which they are consummated. Of course, the incomplete society below comprehends aberrations, misconjunctions, half-conjunctions, and a great many mere scaffoldings which the other does not. The Society Organized is called a city, the city of the living God; because it is the most condensed, completest form of society. It also includes or takes in “angels an innumerable company,” some of them, we are to believe, from worlds more ancient than ours and from empires afar off, quite unknown to us. It gathers in also “the first-born” of the Church, and puts their names in register on the roll of the grand all-worlds’ society. And “the spirits of just men made perfect” are either there or on the way up, to be joined in the general city life and order, for which they are now made ready. All the indications are that a complete organization is so far

made, and all its distributions and relations adjusted; as when men of all grades and races are gathered into and unified in the state of city organization. In this organized society it is one of the points to be noted that there is no distribution by sect or sectarian names. The myriads that arrive, new-comers from the Church below, drop off the names of their sects, having left them in their graves not raised; for there is no resurrection promised of these names. They are not Romish any more, not Anglican, not Calvinistic, not Armenian, or Wesleyan, their general assembly is not the Presbyterian, their crowns are not brimmed as being Friends, and since baptism is no more wanted, there are no Baptists. But they are all earth’s people and Christian to a man, all other names being sunk and forgot in their now complete society. The Church below, the Society Organizing, is, in fact, the same as the other, and is pouring on its trains continually to be merged in that other and become a part of it. It is even called a family—“of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”
Bushnell.

PSALM CXXXIV.

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

1 BEHOLD, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD,

Which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

■ Lift up your hands to the sanctuary,

And bless ye the LORD.

3 The LORD bless thee out of Zion;

Even he that made heaven and earth.

THE whole series of pilgrimage songs closes, in the most appropriate manner, with a summons to bless the Lord, addressed by the people to the priests in attendance at the sanctuary (vs. 1, 2), and indirectly answered by a priestly blessing on the worshippers themselves (v. 3). The *servants of the Lord* here meant are not His people indiscriminately, but His official servants, and most probably the priests, as will appear from v. 3. A.

Three things are clear with regard to this Psalm. First, that it consists of a greeting (vs. 1, 2), and a reply (v. 3). Next, that the greeting is addressed to those priests and Levites who

had the night-watch in the temple. Lastly, that this Psalm is purposely placed at the end of the collection of pilgrim songs in order to take the place of a final blessing. D.—That the address is not to any persons in the habit of frequenting the temple is evident, because it was only in rare and exceptional cases that such persons could be found in the temple at night. And, further, the word “stand” in v. 1 is the common word to express the service of the priests and Levites, who had their duties by night as well by day. Accordingly, it has been supposed by Tholuck and others that the greeting in vs. 1. 2 was addressed to the guard going

off duty by those who came to relieve them, and who in their turn received the answer in v. 3. Others conjecture that the greeting was interchanged between the two companies of the night-watch, when they met in making their rounds through the temple. Delitzsch, however, thinks that the words of vs. 1, 2 are addressed by the congregation to the priests and Levites who had charge of the night service, and that v. 3 is an answer of blessing from them to the congregation, who were gathered on the temple-mount. P.

The Psalm teaches us to pray for those who are continually ministering before the Lord, and it invites all ministers to pronounce benedictions upon their loving and prayerful people.

2. And bless the Lord. God's ministers are to bless men by their teaching, but they must yet more bless Jehovah with their worship. Too often men look at public worship only from the side of its usefulness to the people; but it is of even higher importance that the Lord God is adored, extolled, and had in reverence. S.

3. Calling up thus to the temple-hill, the Church receives from above the benedictory counter-greeting: Jehovah bless thee out of Zion, the Creator of heaven and earth. It is addressed to the Church as one person and to each individual in this indivisible Church. D.—As the priests were called upon to bless God in behalf of the people, so here they bless the people in behalf of God. The priests, having blessed God, turn and bless the people. The obvious allusion to the sacerdotal blessing (Num. 6 : 23-27) favors the optative construction of this verse, which really includes a prediction, the Lord will bless thee. A.

The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion. He doth not say, the Lord bless thee out of heaven, but "*bless thee out of Zion.*" As if he would teach us that all blessings come as immediately and primarily from heaven, so mediately and secondarily from Zion, where the temple stood. If ever, therefore, we would have blessings outward, inward, private, public, secular, spiritual; if ever we would have blessing in our estate, in our land, in our souls, we must pray for it, and pray for it here, in Zion, in God's house. A. Wright.

As we part company with the pilgrims, it is pleasant to think of them as starting on their homeward journey in the starlight from under the shadow of the temple, with the benediction of the priests making music in their hearts. But it is still more pleasant to reflect that, as they went on their way, pondering the priestly benediction, what time the sun rose into the sky to shine on righteous and unrighteous, on just and unjust, they would be reminded of a Divine love from whose grace no man could be hid, which shone with steadfast rays on every race, and brooded, with healing in its wings, over the whole world. One likes to think that the Book closes with the words, "Maker of heaven and earth," and to reflect what a fine omen, what a wide promise of hope, there is in these words for us and for all men.

For we, too, are pilgrims on our way home; and much of the journey has to be done in the dark; and there are many steep roads to climb, and rough places on which we must pick our steps, and smooth places on which we may easily slip or stray; and there are many perils and many adversaries to be encountered. But we, too, have come to Mount Zion; for us there is a "city of the living God," the heavenly Jerusalem, in which an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect serve God day and night, a city which rings with joy and praise forever. And as we look up and listen, in the pauses of our journey, we, too, may catch glimpses of the glory of the city, and hear some faint echoes of its songs. The heavenly ministrants do, we know, look down on us with strengthening sympathy and compassion, and cry, "The Lord bless thee out of Zion." Nay, God Himself, since He is our Maker and loves us, even He Himself blesses us out of Zion, sends us help from the sanctuary, and bids us good speed on our journey. Let us, then, lift up our eyes unto the mountains. And if any ask, "Whence cometh your help?" let us make answer and say, "Our help cometh from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth; He will keep us from all evil; He will keep our soul; He will keep our going out and our coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." Cox.

PSALM CXXXV.

- 1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
 Praise ye the name of the LORD ;
 Praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD :
- 2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD,
 In the courts of the house of our God.
- 3 Praise ye the LORD ; for the LORD is good :
 Sing praises unto his name ; for it is pleasant.
- 4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself,
 And Israel for his peculiar treasure.
- 5 For I know that the LORD is great,
 And that our Lord is above all gods.
- 6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that hath he done,
 In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
- 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth ;
 He maketh lightnings for the rain ;
 He bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.
- 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,
 Both of man and beast.
- 9 He sends signs and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
 Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
- 10 Who smote many nations,
 And slew mighty kings ;
- 11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
 And Og king of Bashan,
 And all the kingdoms of Canaan :
- 12 And gave their land for an heritage,
 An heritage unto Israel his people.
- 13 Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever ;
 Thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.
- 14 For the LORD shall judge his people,
 And repent himself concerning his servants.
- 15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
 The work of men's hands.
- 16 They have mouths, but they speak not ;
 Eyes have they, but they see not ;
- 17 They have ears, but they hear not ;
 Neither is there any breath in their mouths.
- 18 They that make them shall be like unto them ;
 Yea, every one that trusteth in them.
- 19 O house of Israel, bless ye the LORD :
 O house of Aaron, bless ye the LORD :
- 20 O house of Levi, bless ye the LORD :
 Ye that fear the LORD, bless ye the LORD.
- 21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion,
 Who dwelleth at Jerusalem.
 PRAISE YE THE LORD.

A PSALM intended for the temple service, and one of the Hallelujah Psalms, though not placed in the same series with the rest. It is, like Psalm 134, an exhortation to the priests and Levites who wait in the sanctuary to praise Jehovah, both because of His goodness in choosing Israel to be His people, and because of His greatness and the almighty power which He has shown in His dominion over the world of nature, and in the overthrow of all the enemies of His people. Then His abiding majesty is contrasted with the nothingness of the idols of the heathen. The Psalm is almost entirely composed of passages taken from other sources. Compare v. 1 with Psalm 134 : 1 ; v. 3 with Psalm 147 : 1 ; vs 6 and 15-20 with Psalm 115 ; vs. 8-12 with Psalm 136 : 10-22. P.

The people of Jehovah are exhorted to praise Him as their peculiar God (vs. 1-4), as the God of nature (vs. 5-7), as the deliverer of Israel

from Egypt and in Canaan (vs. 8-12), as their hope also for the future (vs. 13, 14), rendered more glorious by contrast with the impotence of idols (vs. 15-18), after which the Psalm concludes as it began with an exhortation to praise God (vs. 19-21). A.

3. *Praise the Lord. Hallelujah* (praise to Jehovah !), *for good (is) Jehovah. Make music to His name, for it is lovely.* The last words may also be translated, *He is lovely, i.e., an object worthy of supreme attachment.* A.—*For the Lord is good*—that is, originally, transcendently, effectively ; He is good, and doeth good, and is therefore to be praised with mind, mouth, and practice. Trapp.

Praise is a constant corrective of the earthliness which hangs about the words and even the thoughts whereby it is contained. And the praise of God is for us the expression of a perfect admiration blended with a perfect love.

It is the admiration of a Being who claims all our hearts in personal devotion, while containing or being Himself all that we speak of in abstract categories as the ideals of goodness and beauty. It is the most ennobling exercise of the human spirit. *E. S. Talbot.*

4-12. Then follow the several grounds of this praise. First, because He has chosen Israel. Next, because He is higher than all the gods of the heathen, as He has shown in His absolute supremacy over the world of nature (vs. 5-7). Then, because He redeemed His people from Egypt (vs. 8, 9). Lastly, because, vanquishing all their enemies, He gave them the promised land (vs. 10-12). *P.*

4. The nation was chosen by God unto Himself to answer the Divine ends and purposes in blessing all mankind. Jacob's race was chosen to be the trustees of His truth, the maintainers of His worship, the mirrors of His mercy. Chosen they were; but mainly for this end, that they might be a peculiar people, set apart unto the service of the true God. *S.*

6. *All that Jehovah will He does in the heavens and in the earth, in the seas and all depths.* It is not merely as their own peculiar God that they are bound to praise Him, but as the universal sovereign. Heaven, earth, and sea are put for the whole frame of nature. *A.*

Whatsoever He pleaseth. This absolute supremacy of God over all the forces and phenomena of the natural world is stated in the same way as in Psalm 115 : 3, with reference more particularly to the weakness of the gods of the nations, as also in this Psalm (vs. 15-18). *P.*—Profane history exhibits the instruments by which Jehovah works; the finger of Divine revelation points to the unseen but almighty hand which wields and guides the instrument, and causes even Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Jews and the people of Israel, to do what the hand and the counsel of God determined before to be done. *George Payne.*

7. As the electricity is dissipated by the frequent discharges the cloud condenses, and there comes a sudden and heavy rain; but the greater the accumulation of electricity, the longer is the rain delayed. Thus connected as the electrical phenomena of the atmosphere are with clouds, vapor, and rain, how forcibly are we struck with these appropriate words in the Scriptures! *Edwin Sidney.*

He bringeth the wind. The winds are, with great beauty, represented as laid up by Him as jewels in a treasure house. Indeed, few verses better express creative control than those in which the winds, which make sport of man's

efforts and defy his power, are represented as thus ready to spring forth at God's bidding from the quarters where they quietly sleep. The occasion comes, the thoughts of Jehovah find expression in His providence, and His ready servants leap suddenly forth. *J. Duns.*

Everything in the material world is under the immediate direction and control of the Lord of all. Observe how the Psalmist brings before us the personal action of Jehovah: "He causeth," "He maketh," "He bringeth." Everywhere the Lord worketh all things, and there is no power which escapes His supremacy. *S.*

8-12. He is worthy to be praised, for He is the Redeemer out of Egypt. He is worthy to be praised, for He is the conqueror of the promised land. *D.*

10. The Israelites' sword, in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. They seem of very small importance to us now, those perpetual contests with the Canaanites, and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, and the Philistines, with which the Books of Joshua and Judges and Samuel are almost filled. We may half wonder that God should have interfered in such quarrels, or have changed the course of nature, in order to give one of the nations of Palestine the victory over another. But in these contests, on the fate of one of these nations of Palestine the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. It might follow that they should thus be accounted the enemies of all mankind—it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctness to despise other nations; still they did God's work—still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it. *Thomas Arnold.*

13. *Jehovah, Thy name (is) to eternity. Jehovah, Thy memory is to generation and generation.* Name and memory are here equivalent expressions, meaning that by which God is remembered or commemorated, His perfections as exhibited in act. The perpetuity of this implies continued or repeated acts of goodness. *A.*—The memorial name of Israel's God is *Jehovah*, with reference to its significance—fidelity to promise, faithfulness resting on immutability. (See Ex. 3 : 15; Hos. 12 : 5.) It had pleased God to give them this name of Himself with this interpretation: with joy, therefore, the Psalmist declares that this name shall stand good through all generations—the ground of

abiding, everlasting confidence in the Lord of hosts as by covenant their own God. C.

God is and will be always the same to His Church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God ; and His Church is and will be the same to Him, a thankful, praising people ; and thus His name *endures forever*. H.—Never shall men forget thee, O Lord. The ordinances of Thine house shall keep Thee in men's memories, and Thine everlasting Gospel and the grace which goes therewith shall be abiding remembrances of Thee. Grateful hearts will forever beat to Thy praise and enlightened minds shall continue to marvel at all Thy wondrous works. Men's memorials decay, but the memorial of the Lord abideth evermore. What a comfort to desponding minds, trembling for the ark of the Lord ! No, precious name, Thou shalt never perish ! Fame of the Eternal, Thou shalt never grow dim ! S.

14. For. Here is the proof and evidence that Jehovah's name and memorial abide forever ; that He will manifest, as in the past, so in the future, His righteousness and His mercy to Israel. P.—He will plead their cause against others that contend with them ; He will judge His people, He will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. He will not Himself contend forever with them, but will repeat Himself concerning His servants, and not proceed in His controversy with them ; He will be entreated for them, or He will be comforted concerning them ; He will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses (Deut. 32 : 36). H.

15. *The idols of the nations (are) silver and gold, works of the hands of man.* The Divine perfection of the Lord is now exhibited in contrast with the impotence and nullity of idols. The terms of the comparison are borrowed, with several variations, from Psalm 115 : 4-8. A.—For the good of His proved Church He ever proves Himself as the living One, whereas idols and idolaters are vain. D.

16, 17. They can neither *speaking* in answer to your prayers and inquiries, nor *see* what you do or what you want, nor *hear* your petitions, nor *smell* your incenses and sacrifices, nor use their *hands* either to take anything from you, or to give anything to you ; nor so much as *mutter*, nor give the least sign of apprehending your condition or concerns. M. Pool.—Idols of gold and silver have a *mouth*, but give no counsel to their worshippers ; *eyes*, but see not the devotions nor the wants of those who serve them ; *ears*, but hear not their cries of distress

or songs of praise ; *nostrils*, but smell not the fragrant incense presented to their images ; *feet*, but they cannot move to help the fallen. They cannot so much as whisper one syllable of response, or even mutter in their throat ! And as man becomes like his God (witness Hindoo idolaters, whose cruelty is just the reflection of the cruelty of their gods), so these gods of the heathen being "soul-less, the worshippers become soul-less themselves." A. Bonar.

The painter, the carver did their part well enough ; they made them with *mouths* and *eyes*, *ears* and *noses*, *hands* and *feet*, but they could put no life into them and therefore no sense. They had better have worshipped a dead carcass (for that had life in it once) than a dead image, which neither has life nor can have. *They speak not*, in answer to those that consult them ; the crafty priest must do it for them. In Baal's image there was *no voice*, *neither any that answered*. *They see not* the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burdens and wants. *They hear not* their prayers, though ever so loud ; *they smell not* their incense, though ever so strong, ever so sweet ; *they handle not* the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers ; they cannot *stretch forth their hands to the needy*. *They walk not*, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as *breathe through their throat* ; they have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them and call a deity into them, as they were before. H.

A beautiful contrast is formed between the God of Israel and the heathen idols. He made everything, they are themselves made by men ; He is in heaven, they are upon earth ; He doeth whatsoever He pleaseth, they can do nothing ; He seeth the distresses, heareth and answereth the prayers, accepteth the offerings, cometh to the assistance and effecteth the salvation of His servants ; they are blind, deaf, dumb, senseless, motionless, and impotent. Equally slow to hear, equally impotent to save in the time of greatest need, will every worldly idol prove on which men have set their affections, and to which they have, in effect, said, "Thou art my god." Bishop Horne.

18. *They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them.* Whatever we adore and esteem, we are changed into its image. Idolaters are as stupid and senseless as the idols to which they pay homage. Thus when God is chosen as our supreme god and

last end, by conversing with Him, the image of His glorious holiness is derived on the soul, and it becomes godly ; the heart is drawn by His attractive excellencies, and the life directed to him. *Bates.*

19-21. Let blessings in the sense of offered praises go forth *out of Zion* to Jehovah, who dwelleth in Jerusalem. Let all the people who constitute His Zion pour forth their ceaseless praises to their Almighty Lord who dwells in the midst of them. *C.*

21. Bless. Praise. Blessing relateth to His benefits, praise to His excellencies. We bless Him for what He is to us, we praise Him for what He is in Himself. Now, whether we bless Him or praise Him, it is still to increase

our love to Him and delight in Him ; for God is not affected with the flattery of empty praises. It doth you good to consider Him as an infinite and eternal Being, and of glorious and incomprehensible majesty. It is pleasant and profitable to us. *Manton.*

A summons to praise Jehovah, who is exalted above the gods of the nations, addressed to the whole of Israel, rounds off the Psalm in such a way that it resumes the strain with which it began. Zion, from whence Jehovah's self-attestation, rich in might and in grace, diffuses itself, is also to be the place from whence the glorifying attestation of Him by the mouth of men spreads itself abroad. History has realized this. *D.*

PSALM CXXXVI.

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD ; for he is good :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 O give thanks unto the God of gods :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 O give thanks unto the Lord of lords :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 To him who alone doeth great wonders :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

5 To him that by understanding made the heavens :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

6 To him that spread forth the earth above the waters :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

7 To him that made great lights :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

8 The sun to rule by day :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

9 The moon and stars to rule by night :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

11 And brought out Israel from among them :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

13 To him which divided the Red Sea in sunder :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

16 To him which led his people through the wilderness :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

17 To him which smote great kings :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

18 And slew famous kings :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

19 Sihon king of the Amorites :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

20 And Og king of Bashan :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

21 And gave their land for an heritage :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

23 Who remembered us in our low estate :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

24 And hath delivered us from our adversaries :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

25 He giveth food to all flesh :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

THIS Psalm is little more than a variation and repetition of the preceding Psalm. It opens with the same liturgical formula with which the one hundred and sixth and one hundred and eighteenth Psalms open, and was evidently designed to be sung antiphonally in the temple worship. Its structure is peculiar. The first line of each verse pursues the theme of the Psalm; the second line, "For His lovingkindness endureth forever," being a kind of refrain or response, breaking in upon and yet sustaining the theme of the Psalm; the first would be sung by some of the Levites, the second by the choir as a body, or by the whole congregation together with the Levites. We have an example of a similar antiphonal arrangement in the first four verses of the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm; but there is no other instance in which it is pursued throughout the Psalm. In the Jewish liturgy this Psalm, with its twenty-six responses, is called "the Great Hallel," by way of distinction from "the Hallel," simply so called, which comprises Psalms 113-118, though there is some uncertainty as to the former designation; for according to some "the Great Hallel" comprises Psalm 135: 4-Psalm 136, and according to others, Psalms 120-136. P.

This Psalm consists of two parts: the first, of nine verses, referring to the God of creation; and the second, of seventeen, referring to the God of redemption. The first nine contain three of thanks to God, and a double three referring to creation. The following seventeen contain twice three on the deliverance from Egypt, one on the journey through the wilderness, a twofold three on the conquest of Peræa, three on the subsequent history of Israel, and one re-echoing the first three of thanksgiving. M.

Praise Him for what He is (vs. 1-3); for what He is able to do (v. 4); for what He has done in creation (vs. 5-9); for what He did in redeeming Israel from bondage (vs. 10-15); for what He did in His providence toward them (vs. 16-22); for His grace in times of calamity (vs. 23, 24); for His grace to the world at large (v. 25); and praise Him at the remembrance that this God is the God of heaven (v. 26). A. Bonar.

1. Give thanks to the Lord, not only because He doeth good, but because He is good; all the streams must be run up to the fountain; not only because He is merciful to us, but because His mercy endures forever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy

which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure forever in the glories and joys of heaven. H.

His mercy endureth forever. This sentence is the wonder of Moses, the sum of revelation, and the hope of man. M.—Many sweet things are in the Word of God, but the name of mercy is the sweetest word in all the Scriptures, which made the Psalmist harp upon it twenty-six times in this Psalm, "*For His mercy endureth forever.*" H. Smith.—It is the sweetest stanza that a man can sing. What joy that there is mercy, mercy with Jehovah, enduring mercy, mercy enduring forever! We are ever needing it, trying it, praying for it, receiving it; therefore let us forever sing of it. S.

4. Doeth wonders. There is nothing that God has established in a constant course of nature, and which, therefore, is done every day, but would seem a miracle and exercise our admiration if it were done but once; nay, the ordinary things in nature would be greater miracles than the extraordinary, which we admire most, if they were done but once. Donne.—This power of preserving things in their station and motion, and the renewing of them, is more stupendous than that which we commonly call miraculous. We call those miracles which are wrought out of the track of nature, and contrary to the usual stream and current of it, which men wonder at because they seldom see them and hear of them, as things rarely brought forth in the world; when, the truth is, there is more of power expressed in the ordinary station and motion of natural causes than in those extraordinary exertings of power. Charnock.

God has wrought many miracles and daily works, but those miracles are much weakened in the sight of men because they are very usual. A greater miracle it is that God Almighty every day feeds all the world, and directs the good, than that miracle was that He filled five thousand men with five loaves; but men wondered at this, not because it was a greater marvel, but because it was unusual. Who now gives fruit to our fields, and multiplies the harvest from a few grains of corn, but He who multiplied the five loaves? Ælfrie. —The philosophy of miracles is just the revelation of the living God, as the God of nature; the revelation of God, not as violating, but as maintaining the order of His world; a revelation sudden and startling, to show to us what could not be shown so effectually in any other way, what "His hand is daily doing for the beautifying and glorifying of the earth and of

life." As Westcott says, in his thoughtful work on *Miracles*, "The order of the universe has a spiritual root. The purpose of love which changes is also the purpose of love which directs it. He who can bind and loose the forces of nature has thus revealed the eternal purpose in which they originate." *Macmillan*.

5-9. The general laws of nature are rules that God has laid down for the regulation of His own procedure. It is not that, as a Being omnipresent and omnipotent, ever watchful and ever active, He needs those helps which man requires in consequence of his infirmities. The Almighty can never be weighed down under the burden of His government. He adopts the mode of procedure by general laws, not for His own convenience, but for that of His intelligent creatures. "I call," says Sir Thomas Browne, "the effects of Nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is; and therefore to ascribe His actions unto her is to devolve the honor of the principal agent upon the instrument, which if with reason we may do, then let our hammers rise up and boast that they have built our houses, and our pen receive the honor of our writings." It is surely possible for us so to expand our minds as to discover both the agent and the instrument—to discover the goodness of God in the blessing sent, and the wisdom of God in the means, so adapted to our state, through which the blessing comes. *M' Cosh*.

When God comes forth from the unvisioned light of His own eternal, self-adequate Being, and flashes into energy in creation, providence, or grace, the law of His working and His purpose are one in all regions. The unity of the Divine acts depends on this, that all flow from one deep source, and all move to one mighty end. This Psalm puts what people call the "philosophy" of creation and of providence very clearly in accordance with this thought, that the love of God is the source, and the blessedness of man the end of all His work. Creation, then, is the effluence of the loving heart of God. Though the sacred characters be but partially legible to us now, what He wrote, on stars and flowers, on the infinitely great and the infinitely small, on the infinitely near and the infinitely far off, with His creating hand, was the one inscription—God is love. And as in nature, so in providence. The origination and the support and the direction of all things are the works and the heralds of the same love. It is printed in starry letters on the sky. It is graven on the rocks and breathed by the flowers. It is spoken as ■ dark saying

even by sorrow and pain. The mysteries of destructive and crushing providences have come from the same source. And he who can see with the Psalmist the ever-during mercy of the Lord, as the reason of creation and of judgments, has in his hands the golden key which opens all the locks in the palace chambers of the great King. He only hath penetrated to the secret of things material, and stands in the light at the centre, who understands that all comes from the one source—God's endless desire for the blessedness of His creatures! A. M.

5. By wisdom made the heavens.

God has built the heavens in wisdom, to declare His glory and to show forth His handiwork. There are no iron tracks with bars and bolts to hold the planets in their orbits. Freely in space they move, ever changing, but never changed; poised and balancing; swaying and swayed; disturbing and disturbed, onward they fly, fulfilling with unerring certainty their mighty cycles. The entire system forms one grand complicated piece of celestial machinery; circle within circle, wheel within wheel, cycle within cycle; revolutions so swift as to be completed in a few hours; movements so slow that their mighty periods are only counted by millions of years. *Anon*.

7. Great lights. The luminaries of heaven are unspeakable blessings to the children of men. The sun, in the greatness of his strength, measures their day, and exerts an influence over animal and vegetable life which surrounds them with innumerable comforts; and the moon and stars, walking forth in their brightness, give direction to them amid the hours of night, and both by land and sea proclaim the wisdom, benignity, and gracious arrangement of the adorable Creator. By these luminaries day and night, heat and cold, summer and winter are continually regulated; so that God's covenant with the earth is maintained through their medium. How truly, then, may we exclaim, "His mercy endureth forever"! *John Morison*.

8. The sun. The *lantern of the world*, as Copernicus names the sun, enthroned in the centre, is the primary source of light and of radiating heat, and the generator of numerous terrestrial, electro-magnetic processes, and indeed of the greater part of the organic vital activity upon our planet, more especially that of the vegetable kingdom. The solar force, in its widest generality, gives rise to alterations on the surface of the earth—partly by gravitative attraction—as in the ebb and flow of the ocean (if we except the share taken in the phenome-

non by lunar attraction); partly by light and heat-generating transverse vibrations of ether, as in the fructifying admixture of the aerial and aqueous envelopes of our planet, from the contact of the atmosphere with the vaporizing fluid element in seas, lakes, and rivers. The solar action operates, moreover, by differences of heat, in exciting atmospheric and oceanic currents; the latter of which have continued for thousands of years (though in an inconsiderable degree) to accumulate or waste away alluvial strata, and thus change the surface of the inundated land; it operates in the generation and maintenance of the electro-magnetic activity of the earth's crust, and that of the oxygen contained in the atmosphere; at one time calling forth calm and gentle forces of chemical attraction, and variously determining organic life in the endosmose of cell-walls and in tissue of muscular and nervous fibres; at another time evoking light processes in the atmosphere, such as the colored coruscations of the polar light, thunder and lightning, hurricanes and water-spouts. But the waves of light not only exert a decomposing and combining action on the corporeal world; they not only call forth the tender germs of plants from the earth, generate the green coloring matter (chlorophyll) within the leaf, and give color to the fragrant blossom; they not only produce myriads of reflected images of the sun in the graceful play of the waves, as in the moving grass of the field; but the rays of celestial light, in the varied gradations of their intensity and duration, are also mysteriously connected with the inner life of man, his intellectual susceptibilities, and the melancholy or cheerful tone of his feelings. This is what Pliny the elder referred to in these words, "The sun chases sadness from the sky, and dissipates the clouds which darken the human heart." *Von Humboldt*.

9. The stars guide the traveller both by sea and land; they direct the navigator in tracing his course through the pathless ocean. They serve "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years." They direct the labors of the husbandman, and determine the return and conclusion of the seasons. They assist us in commerce and in endeavoring to propagate religion among the nations, by showing us our path to every region of the earth. They have enabled us to measure the circumference of the globe, to ascertain the *density* of the materials of which it is composed, and to determine the exact position of all places upon its surface. They cheer the long nights of several months in the polar regions, which would otherwise be over-

spread with impenetrable darkness. Above all, they open a prospect into the regions of other worlds, and tend to amplify our views of the Almighty Being who brought them into existence by His power, and "whose kingdom ruleth over all." In these arrangements of the stars in reference to our globe, the Divine wisdom and goodness may be clearly perceived. *T. Dick*.

10. Up to this point it is God, the Creator of all things, to whose praise the poet stirs up men; from this point onward it is the God of the history of redemption. *D*.

10-15. Because the monarch of Egypt stood in the way of the Lord's gracious purposes it became needful for the Lord to deal with him in justice; but the great design was mercy to Israel, and through Israel mercy to succeeding ages and to all the world. Mercy cleared the road, mercy cheered the host, mercy led them down, and mercy brought them up again. Even to the depth of the sea mercy reaches—there is no end to it, no obstacle in the way of it, no danger to believers in it, while Jehovah is all around. "Forward!" be *our* watchword, as it was that of Israel of old, for mercy doth compass us about. *S*.

23-25. God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated, first, in the redemption of His Church (vs. 23, 24); in the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish Church out of the hands of their oppressors; when, in the years of their servitude, their estate was very low, God remembered them and raised them up saviours—the judges—and David at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies; but especially in the great redemption of the universal Church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, "*He remembered us, the children of men, in our low estate, in our lost estate, for His mercy endureth forever*;" He sent His Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies; *for His mercy endureth forever*; He was sent to redeem us and not the angels that sinned; for His mercy endureth forever." Second, in the provision He makes for all the creatures (v. 25), *He gives food to all flesh*. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence, that wherever He has given life He gives food agreeable and sufficient; and He is a good housekeeper that provides for so large a family. *H*.

The very air we breathe, the bread we eat, our common blessings, we have them all from grace, and all from the tender mercy of the Lord. You have here the story of the notable effects of God's mercy, and he concludes it

thus, "*Who giveth food to all flesh : for His mercy endureth forever.*" Mark, the Psalmist doth not only ascribe those mighty victories, those glorious instances of His love and power to His unchangeable mercy, but he traces our daily bread to the same cause. It is not only mercy which gives us Christ and salvation by Christ, and all those glorious deliverances and triumphs over the enemies of the Church ; but it is mercy which furnisheth our tables, it is mercy that we taste with our mouths and wear at our backs. It is notable, our Lord Jesus, when there were but five barley loaves and two fishes, "*lifted up His eyes and gave thanks.*" Though our provision be never so homely, yet God's grace and mercy must be acknowledged. *Manton.*

26. The God of heaven. The phrase, "*God of heaven,*" is not found in the earlier Scriptures. We meet it nowhere else in the Psalms ; but we meet it in 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Jonah, and it is twice found in the Apocalypse. It is a sublime and appropriate designation of the true God, expressive of His glorious elevation above the passions and perturbations of earth. To him all flesh should give thanks, for all receive His mercy in many forms and ways. His favors come down on generation after generation, and to His willing, obedient people they shall flow on during eternal ages. *Plumer.*

There is no reason to be given for grace but grace ; there is no reason to be given for mercy but mercy ; "*for His mercy endureth forever.*" *Ralph Venning.*

Jesus Christ is the organ and centre of all mercy for men. A merciful God is their God in Jesus Christ. It is part of His royal name and title, the Lord God, merciful and gracious—keeping mercy for thousands ; long-suffering and of great mercy ; He delighteth in mercy. Such are some of the phrases of the Old Testament, while in the New this is the great topic, and every page seems to exhale the fragrance of the benediction, grace, mercy, and peace. The goodness, the love, the grace, and the mercy of God are only so many phases of the same orb ; all the outshining of one and the same benignant Jehovah ; and all entitled to our praise.

If it was right for Israel to recount the memory of these national advantages, it is doubly incumbent on Christians to speak to the praise and the glory of that grace wherein we are accepted in the Beloved. Especially should we record the great transaction, the chosen display of Divine goodness to mankind, in the election of Messiah—His taking human flesh, His accompanying with rejecting men in circumstances of lowliness and shame and pain, His conflict with the hour of darkness, His bloody, mysterious death, and His godlike resurrection. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The main channel and torrent of mercy flows in a majestic stream in the redemption of the soul ; but its flood receives and embosoms ten thousand lesser currents of temporal bounty. Divine mercy does not neglect the less while she accomplishes the greater. As she marches heavenward, with eyes fixed upon the crown and kingdom, she scatters largesses at every step. All our blessings flow from this same open hand, and are, therefore, properly denominated *mercies*. The covenant includes these, and the believer hopes for them, on the principle that all is his. Our persons, our landscapes, our neighborhoods, our city, our State, our nation, our race, are recipients every moment of this boundless favor ; magnified inconceivably when we consider that it descends upon the unworthy, and made most tender and impressive when we consider that it descends upon us. And there is no view of the Divine glory which so exalts Him, as when He is beheld as the source of incessant and innumerable and immeasurable rivers of good ; Himself the great parent on whom all the ranks of creatures hang and are nourished. *J. W. A.*

How blessed to know of a love which cannot change or die ! We may bring the blessedness of all the past into the present, and calmly face the misty future, sure that it cannot rob us of His love. Looking on all the flow of ceaseless change, the waste and fading, the alienation and cooling, the decrepitude and decay of earthly affection, we can lift up with gladness, heightened by the contrast, the triumphant song of the ancient Church, "*Oh, give thanks unto the Lord ; for He is good, because His mercy endureth forever !*" *A. M.*

PSALM CXXXVII.

- 1 BY the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
- 2 Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
- 3 For there they that led us captive required of
us songs,
And they that wasted us *required of us mirth,*
saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
- 4 How shall we sing the LORD's song
In a strange land ?
- 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *her cunning.*
- 6 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth,
- If I remember thee not ;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.
- 7 Remember, O LORD, against the children of
Edom
The day of Jerusalem ;
Who said, Rase it, rase it,
Even to the foundation thereof.
- 8 O daughter of Babylon, that art to be de-
stroyed ;
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
- 9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth
thy little ones
Against the rock.

BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON.

AFTER the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving we have a subdued and plaintive melody relating to the time when Zion lay in ruins, and the cheerful songs of the Levite choir were hushed. It is the reminiscence of one who had recently returned from the captivity, recalling the taunts of the oppressor. It is beautiful in expression, and although tender and elegiac, especially at the opening, is spirited and pictorial, and becomes at last almost terrible. *De Witt.*

The one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm for tenderness and poetic beauty is hardly excelled by any composition in the entire collection. The reader is introduced at once into the midst of the sad scenes of the exile, and can almost look upon the neglected harp and hear the wailing lamentations. The Psalm was evidently composed subsequently to the return of the Jews from Babylon, yet not long after that event. It is not to be regarded simply as an expression of the feelings of which any captive Jew, endued with quick sensibilities, might be conscious, or as an outburst of patriotism ; it is a record of the fervent desires of the poor exiles that they might see the city of their solemnities again, and join in the worship which had once been paid to their fathers' God. They would rather be door-keepers in their national house of prayer than live amid all the sensual delights of Babylon. The Psalm is naturally divided into

three strophes. Vs. 1-3 express the sorrow of the exiles in their remembrance of Zion. It would be doing violence to their most sacred feelings to comply with the demand of their proud oppressors to sing to them the songs of Zion. Vs. 4-6 give utterance to the passionate determination of the exiles never to profane the Lord's songs by singing them in a foreign land, and never to forget their beloved city. Vs. 7-9 invoke destruction upon the Edomites for their cruel conduct at the time Jerusalem was destroyed, and also upon the Babylonians for their oppressive acts. The destruction of the children of the Babylonians is a just recompense for their cruelties toward the Jews. He who finds fault with the spirit of these verses, and denounces it as a relic of a barbarous age, has very inadequate or erroneous views both of the principles of the Divine government and of the deeper necessities of his own moral nature. When outrageous cruelty or wickedness of any kind meets with retribution, we feel that it is condign, just, deserved, and this feeling is consistent with the tenderest compassion. *B. B. Edwards.*

This is the most direct and striking reminiscence of the Babylonish Exile in the whole collection, and could scarcely have been written but by one who had partaken of its trials. A. —The writer begins by telling in language of pathetic beauty the tale of his captivity. He draws first the picture of the land—so unlike his

own mountain land—the broad plain watered by the Euphrates and intersected by its canals, their banks fringed with willows, with no purple peak, no deep, cool glen to break the vast, weary, monotonous expanse; and then he draws the figure of the captives in their deep despondency, a despondency so deep that it could find no solace even in those sacred melodies which were dear to them as life—"As for our harps, we hanged them up on the willows by the water-side." Next, his verse tells of the mocking taunt of their captors, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion;" and the half-sad, half-proud answer of the heart, strong in its faith and unconquerable in its patriotism, "How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a strange land?" It were a profanation, it were a treachery. Sooner let the tongue fail to sing than sing to make the heathen mirth; sooner let the hand lose her cunning than tune the harp to please the stranger.

No wonder that then, brooding over the memory of the past, brooding over his wrongs, and seeing around him in blackened ruins and wasted fields the footsteps of the invader, the poet should utter his wrath. No wonder that the Psalm concludes with that fierce outburst of natural resentment, a resentment which borrows almost a grandeur from the religious fervor, the devoted patriotism, whence it springs. Terrible have been the wrongs of Jerusalem; let the revenge be terrible. Woe to those who in the day of her fall took part with her enemies and rejoiced in her overthrow, when they ought rather to have come to her aid! Woe to the proud oppressors who have so long held her children captive, and made their hearts bitter with insult and wrong! P.—We note in the closing verses a loftier than poetic inspiration. The pen, and harp, and voice that swept on in these stirring measures were those of a *prophet*. What stands before his illuminated vision is not a personified principle, incarnations wrought by poetic fancy, to be dissipated presently into thin air. They are indeed persons, yet not as known individuals of our race, each standing for himself, against whom for personal wrong his darker human passions are roused; but impersonations, standing for men always and everywhere, who crush innocent lives under their iron heel, who know neither pity nor kindness, justice nor truth, but with determined will identify themselves with evil of devilish stamp, hating men and defying God. It is no base human passion, but impassioned prophecy, in the name of Him to whom vengeance belongs, that calls down upon them a doom from which,

if they repent not, there is no escape. And with whatever sadness, yet with firmness unflinching, let all people that are loyal to God pronounce their Amen! *De Witt.*

1. By the rivers. Euphrates, Tigris, Chaboras, and the canals which intersected the country. The exiles would naturally resort to the banks of the streams as shady, cool and retired spots, where they could indulge in their sorrowful remembrances. The prophets of the exile saw their visions by the river (Ezek. 1 : 1; Dan. 8 : 2). *Bib. Sacra.*

Nothing could present a more striking contrast to their native country than the region into which the Hebrews were transplanted. Instead of their irregular and picturesque mountain city, crowning its unequal heights, and looking down into its deep and precipitous ravines, through one of which a scanty stream wound along, they entered the vast, square, and level city of Babylon, occupying both sides of the broad Euphrates; while all around spread immense plains, which were intersected by long, straight canals, bordered by rows of willows. How unlike their national temple—a small but highly finished and richly adorned fabric, standing in the midst of its courts on the brow of a lofty precipice—the colossal temple of the Chaldean Bel, rising from the plain, with its eight stupendous stories or towers, one above the other, to the perpendicular height of a furlong! The palace of the Babylonian kings was more than twice the size of their whole city; it covered eight miles, with its hanging gardens built on arched terraces, each rising above the other, and rich in all the luxuriance of artificial cultivation. How different from the sunny cliffs of their own land, where the olive and the vine grew spontaneously, and the cool, shady, and secluded valleys, where they could always find shelter from the heat of the burning noon! No wonder then that, in the pathetic words of their own hymn, "*by the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, when they remembered Zion.*" Of their general treatment as captives we know little. The Psalm seems to intimate that the Babylonians had taste enough to appreciate the poetical and musical talent of the exiles, and that they were summoned occasionally to amuse the banquets of their masters, though it was much against their will that they sang the songs of Zion in a strange land. In general it seems that the Jewish exiles were allowed to dwell together in considerable bodies. They were colonists rather than captives, and became by degrees possessed of considerable property. They had taken the advice of the Prophet Jeremiah

(who gave them no hopes of speedy return to their homes); they had built houses, planted gardens, married and brought up children, submitted themselves as peaceful subjects to the local authorities—all which implies a certain freedom, a certain degree of prosperity and comfort. They had free enjoyment of their religion, such at least as adhered faithfully to their belief in Jehovah. We hear of no special and general religious persecution. *Milman.*

4. *How shall we sing the song of Jehovah on a foreign soil?* These are the words with which the invitation was or might have been rejected at the time. The question implies a moral impossibility. The idea is not that the Psalms themselves would be profaned by being sung there, but that the expression of religious joy would be misplaced and incongruous, implying an oblivion of the sanctuary and its forfeited advantages. A.—Why could they not sing? In most touching words they answer, “How shall we sing the songs of our Jehovah in a strange land?” Every strain would seem in its echo to mock our grief, telling us that He is our faithful God no longer! Ah! can we forget Jerusalem? To sing in tones of mirth as they demand would imply it. C.

5. **Let my right hand forget her cunning.** There is a striking and appropriate point in this, which has been overlooked. It is that, as it is customary for people in the East to swear by their professions, so one who has no profession—who is poor and destitute, and has nothing of recognized value in the world—swears by his right hand, which is his sole stake in society, and by the “*cunning*” of which he earns his daily bread. Modern translators substitute “skill;” but perhaps a term still more general would be better, such as, “May my right hand lose its power.” *Kitto.*

5, 6. It is hard for us to imagine how much the ancient Jews loved their native land. There the *ancestral* recollections were such as no other nation has ever enjoyed. The founder of the race was the father of the faithful, the friend of God, with whom angels watched in company, and his great-grandson was the prime-minister of Egypt, the saviour alike of his own race and of his adopted country, and whose bones now reposed in the Promised Land, in the field which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. The meek law-giver, too, what reminiscences clustered around his name, whom the Lord knew face to face, who was almost permitted to gaze upon the splendors of the Godhead itself! A series of wondrous miracles had been interwoven into the national history and into the songs of the

temple. In the lapse of ages, these hallowed remembrances, these dear and cherished monuments, multiplied on every side, till the very soil became sacred. On this mountain God appeared; under this oak He stood visible; here at this fountain angels talked. In that spot fire descended from heaven. In that valley an army perished when the seals of pestilence were unloosed. Jerusalem, moreover, was the centre and substance of all which was holy and venerable, beautiful for situation, the city of the great king; the temple of burnished gold, crowning its highest summit, no unapt emblem of that *new* Jerusalem which John saw in apocalyptic vision. How could the pious Jew bear to be exiled from such a country? *B. B. Edwards.*

Under the reign of King David’s “Greater Son” it is our privilege to live. We have the spiritual church of the Messiah, far more glorious than its ancient type of Zion. Would that our Ark of the Covenant might be as vividly present with us and as personally dear to us as was the golden ark to God’s true people of old, in the tabernacle on Mount Zion and the temple on Mount Moriah! If the ancient Jew “preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy,” shall we not cherish such a devotion to the Church of Christ as shall continually prompt the protestation—

“For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given”?

—*N. C. Burt.*

7-9. The Psalmist prays for vengeance upon Edom and Babylon. How shamefully the Edomites, that brother-people related to Israel by descent and yet pre-eminently hostile to it, behaved at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans as their malicious, rapacious, and barbarous helpers, we see from the prediction of Obadiah, which Jeremiah has taken up again into his prophecies. From the false brethren the imprecation turns to Babylon, the city of the world-kingdom. D.

7. The “day of Jerusalem” was that memorable one when the walls fell, and her enemies rushed in to sack, burn, and destroy. Then the children of Edom, their national cousins, were specially spiteful, revengeful. Wisely, prudentially, they had a common interest with Judah in repelling this Chaldean invasion and in driving this conquering horde back from Western Asia to their home on the Euphrates; but their old antipathy against the Hebrew race blazed forth, an outrage on humanity and a rank offence against the God of heaven! As said

here, they shouted, Raze, raze the city to its very foundations ; leave not one stone upon another ! The Prophet Obadiah (vs. 10-15) charges upon them that they stood on the enemy's side ; looked on joyfully, and spake proudly in the day of their distress ; joined in the pillage ; intercepted the fugitives and turned them back upon the sword of the conquerors. Amos (1 : 11) gave the reasons for the ruin of Edom, saying : " Because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever." Was there not a natural fitness in the prayer that God would " remember these children of Edom" ? C.

8. *O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed.* In the beginning of the fifth year of Darius happened the revolt of the Babylonians, and he besieged the city with all his forces. As soon as the Babylonians saw themselves begirt by such an army as they could not cope with in the field, they turned their thoughts wholly to the supporting of themselves in the siege ; in order whereto they took a resolution, the most desperate and barbarous that ever any nation practised ; for to make their provisions last the longer, they agreed to cut off all unnecessary mouths among them, and therefore drawing together all the women and children, they strangled them all, whether wives, sisters, daughters, or young children useless for the wars, excepting only that every man was allowed to save one of his wives, which he best loved, and a maid-servant to do the work of the house. *Prideaux.*

9. The young children are to be dashed in pieces, in order that a new generation may not restore the world-empire that has been cast down. It is zeal for God that puts such words into the poet's mouth ; but they do not suit the mouth of the New Testament Church. In Old Testament times the Church had still the form of a nation, and the longing for a revelation of the Divine righteousness clothed itself accordingly in a martial form. D.—A deeper view of the case will suggest that this idea of retribution, even in its most specific form, was *not original* with these captives. They must have known the "burden on Babylon" as given by Isaiah (13 : 16, 18). "The children shall be dashed in pieces before their eyes ; they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb ; their eye shall not spare children." Also the words of Jeremiah, sent expressly to them during their captivity : "Take vengeance upon her ; as she hath done, do unto her. Recompense her according to her works ; according to all that she

hath done, do unto her" (Jer. 50 : 15, 29). These and other similar prophecies must have taught them unmistakably God's purpose of retribution upon both Babylon and Edom, and, in fact, must have suggested to them the very ideas which seem to our view most exceptionable. C.

8, 9. Happy. In this place alone the English Bible translates *'ashrê, happy*, as of personal enjoyment, a meaning it never has. It expresses here emphatic approval of divinely ordered retribution. It would apply to a tender-hearted judge, as once seen by the writer, with streaming eyes pronouncing the death penalty on one guilty of brutal murder. *De Witt.*

According to Scripture, evil, in the long course of its development and reproduction, concentrates itself in successive principles, persons, systems, nations ; in Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Lord ; in the Jews, who rejected the flower and crown of all their history ; in that ordered system of error and persecution, be it what it may, which is called Babylon. No passage in the Psalms has given more offence than that which comes at the close of the tender *Super flumina*. But for the attentive student, the doom of Babylon hangs in the air of prophecy. We close the Psalter for a time ; and after many days, as we draw near to the end of the whole volume of Revelation, we are startled by a new echo of the words of the old one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm—"Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen. Reward her even as she rewarded you ; and double unto her double, according to her works." *Bishop Alexander.*

The writer of the Psalm pronounces the Divine judgment against Babylon, the enemy and oppressor of God's people. But the *language* is the pictorial, poetic language which that age used, and which alone was then intelligible. In war peoples were exterminated, and even little children were dashed to pieces and destroyed. Of course we are to deny, as God denies, approval to such conduct. "How then can the prophet-Psalmist call men who do such things blessed" ? This is our answer. Blessed are they who fulfil the command of God, even in the destruction of those whom He has appointed to destruction. Blessed are they, even though they live in an age of darkness and cruelty, even though their *way* of doing what God commands be coarse and revolting to the Christian conscience of men to day. We may be sure it is and ever was more coarse and revolting to God. *Herrick.*

The Jews were punished for their apostasy by being carried as captives to Babylon, their city and temple being destroyed by fire. A captivity of seventy years cured them of their propensity to idolatry, and caused them to long for the land and the worship of their fathers. Babylon, in turn, was overthrown for her pride, her idolatry, her luxury, and her cruelty. These last two verses of the Psalm shock our Christian sensibilities; yet, when interpreted according to the customs of ancient warfare, they simply express the desire of victory; for, "according to the barbarous usage of those days, the slaughter of infants belonged to the practice of war, when a fortress had been carried by storm. At a much later period, we find that the barbarity of the Greeks was so great that during an insurrection the mob had the children of the rich trampled to death by oxen; and, when the aristocracy had regained their power, they ordered their enemies, along with their wives and children, to be cast into the flames." Such imprecations in the Psalms should not be judged by that more merciful feeling which Christianity has infused into the code of war; neither should they be taken for the mere cry of personal or national revenge. The Jews had so far identified their capital and kingdom with the kingdom of God upon earth, that an assault upon these was the double crime of sacrilege and rebellion against Jehovah; and hence their patriotism was intensified by their religious faith. This comes out very beautifully and tenderly in the preceding verses of the Psalm. The Jews were then in a land of great beauty and fertility; and, though they were captives, the way to wealth and preferment was open before them, if they should choose to adopt the country and its customs. But they clung to the memory of their beloved Zion. Though Jerusalem had been burned, and its walls razed to their foundations, it was yet to them the most precious spot of earth. No beauty of scenery, no diversion of society, no bribe of pleasure, could cause them to forget the sorrows of the

Lord's house. So should we set the kingdom of God above all our joys, and account whatever evil befalls that kingdom a personal sorrow and disaster. J. P. T.

The only questions that remain with reference to the Imprecatory Psalms are such as these: What are they to us? Can we use them in our worship without being faithless to the Divine spirit of love that irradiates the Gospel and is sometime to irradiate the world? Am I to unite with the great congregation in uttering these terrible sentences, and what is their meaning as issuing from my lips? Surely we are to use them; but whatever else they mean for us, they cannot mean that we are thus to express our hatred to the enemies of David, or of some unknown writer of sacred song, and to unite with him in praying for their extermination. He and they have passed from the earth long ago, and everything that relates to them is irreversibly settled. They exist here only in the images they suggest to the thoughts of men as shades of the past. Nor does our use of them mean that we are thus to denounce *our own* enemies. We have no such enemies as these, and they are never to be classed with the facts of our personal life. They stand before us as vivid representations of the hostility to God that is the black curse of the world, and which we, as born of God, must hate and denounce forever. The more I love God, and love my fellow-men in their actual personality, each and all, the more heartily and bitterly I shall detest and curse the principle of evil, incarnate or unincarnate, that, if it could, would blot out the light of the world, and leave us all in the blackness of darkness forever. This is the solution of our paradox. Love, because it is love, must hate evil. And God, because He is love, hates it. And we, if we have the love of God and man in our hearts, always and everywhere must hate it. *De Witt.*

PSALM CXXXVIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 I WILL give thee thanks with my whole heart :
Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee.</p> <p>2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,
And give thanks unto thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth :
For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.</p> <p>3 In the day that I called thou answeredst me,
Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul.</p> <p>4 All the kings of the earth shall give thee thanks, O LORD,
For they have heard the words of thy mouth.</p> | <p>5 Yea, they shall sing of the ways of the LORD :
For great is the glory of the LORD.</p> <p>6 For though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly :
But the haughty he knoweth from afar.</p> <p>7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me ;
Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies,
And thy right hand shall save me.</p> <p>8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me :
Thy mercy, O LORD, <i>endureth</i> for ever ;
Forsake not the works of thine own hands.</p> |
|---|---|

THIS is the first of a series of eight Psalms (138-145), probably the last composed by David, a kind of commentary on the great Messianic promise in 2 Sam. 7. They are found in this part of the Psalter, in consequence of having been made the basis, or rather the body, of a system or series (135-146) by a later writer. A. —These eight Psalms are composed in the *first* person, and they follow very happily after the fifteen "Songs of Up-goings," and the three Psalms of praise uttered by the chorus of those who have *gone up* to Zion. Those Psalms were the united utterances of national devotion. These eight Psalms are the devout Israelite's manual of *private* prayer and praise. C. *Words-worth*.

The Psalm before us contains an acknowledgment of God's goodness as experienced already, an anticipation of His universal recognition by the nations, and, in the mean time, of additional favors to the Psalmist, or to the Church of which he was the temporary head. Such a Psalm was, of course, well suited to sustain the faith and revive the hopes of a later generation. A.

The Psalm consists of three strophes. In the first the poet encourages himself to praise God both because of His goodness and faithfulness and His great promises, and also because he himself had had his prayers answered (vs. 1-3). He utters the hope, the prophecy, that the kings of the earth shall acknowledge the greatness of

Jehovah—His greatness chiefly in this, that He does not measure by any human standard of great and small, of high and low (vs. 4-6). The application of all that he has learned of Jehovah's character to his own individual experience in prospect of trouble and danger (vs. 7, 8). P.

2. The Psalmist will thank Him for His grace, *i.e.*, His anticipating, condescending love ; and for His truth, *i.e.*, His truthfulness and faithfulness ; and more especially for that He has made His promise great above all His name, *i.e.*, for having given His promise, which infinitely surpasses everything whereby He has hitherto gotten for Himself a name and a memorial. D.

I will worship toward Thy holy temple ; or, the place of God's dwelling, where the ark abode. He would worship God in God's own way. The Lord had ordained a centre of unity, a place of sacrifice, a house of His indwelling ; and David accepted the way of worship enjoined by revelation. *And praise Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and for Thy truth.* Praise would be the main part of David's worship ; the name or character of God the great object of his song ; and the special point of his praise the grace and truth which shone so conspicuously in that name. S.

Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the

host of them by the breath of His mouth." But mightier far is the Word by which a lost world is redeemed. This is the "Word" that He hath "*magnified above all His name,*" as displaying at once the exceeding greatness of His power, the resources of His manifold wisdom, and the blended glories of holiness and love. *John Lillie.*

—God has a *greater* regard unto the words of His mouth than to the works of His hand; heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of what He hath spoken shall never fall to the ground. *E. Erskine.*

Above all Thy name. The expression seems to mean that to the soul waiting upon God and trusting in His Word the promise becomes so precious, so strong a ground of hope, that it surpasses all other manifestations of God's goodness and truth; or in the promise may here also be included the fulfilment of the promise. P. —He would sooner allow all His other perfections to come to naught, than for His faithfulness to fail. He has so magnified His faithfulness that His love, His mercy, His grace, would all sooner fail than His faithfulness—the Word of His mouth and what He has revealed in the Scripture. *Philpot.*

In the sacred volume all the glory of the God-head shines; there we are admitted even to the council-chamber of the Most High, to hear the covenant entered into between the Father and the Son. This mysterious transaction having taken place in the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold all the perfections of God united and harmonizing in a way that they never could by any other means; we see justice more inexorable than if it had executed vengeance on the whole human race; and mercy more abundant than if it had spared the whole human race without any such atonement. There, as it is well expressed, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Of this great mystery we find not a trace in the whole creation besides; but in the Word it is reflected as in a mirror (2 Cor. 3: 18). From the Word we derive all our knowledge of Divine truth and all our hopes of everlasting salvation. Nor is it the knowledge only of truth that we obtain, but the operation and efficacy of it on our souls. There is in Divine truth when applied by the Holy Spirit ■ power to wound, to sanctify, to save. When it comes to the soul with power, the stoutest heart in the universe is made to tremble; when it is poured out as balm, the most afflicted creature under heaven is made to leap for joy. Thus God has magnified and will magnify His name. *C. Simeon.*

When the Bible, reason, and the Church concur in regard to a doctrine, that doctrine may be set down as having a clear majority. If the Bible and reason concur, but the Church dissents, the majority is still for the doctrine. If the Bible propounds, and reason and the Church dissent, still the doctrine has a clear majority. The Bible, reason, and the Church are not a tripod, but a pyramid. The Bible is the base, the Church a temple built upon it, and reason is its dome of crystal, letting in the light of heaven that all may be clearly seen and set in order. Take off the dome, the pile remains undisturbed. Take off the ecclesiastical structure, still the pyramid stands. The foundation standeth sure. Other foundation can no man lay than is laid. *Interior.*

The history of the Church abounds in proofs that the study of the Bible and intense spiritual life go hand in hand. As we look back upon certain epochs when there were great awakenings, we find that the most important factor which brought about the wonderful work was a return to both the spirit and the letter of the revealed Word. There were controversies on theological questions, and some of them were animated enough, but they took their place in the background when the supreme question of the conversion of souls came to the front. Here before me is a volume of sermons preached by Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Blair, and published in Boston in 1739. They are fair specimens of the preaching of the times. One of these sermons is on the Divinity of the Scriptures, and another on the Sanctifying Efficacy of the Gospel on the Souls of Men, while the whole volume abounds in appeals to the exact language of the Word of God. The first six of the nineteen remarkable letters of Jonathan Dickinson on religious subjects, published about the same time (Boston, 1745), dealt entirely with the Old and New Testaments. It was when the Bible, with all its fulness of promise and threat, was held up, that the hearer and the reader were aroused, and from deep conviction they passed into a beautiful and joyous Christian life. The same return to the study of the Bible is perceptible in the great struggles for the reform of the Church. There is not a country where the Reformation was ■ success, or, for that matter, where it was attempted and at last failed, where the whole movement did not find its very centre and inspiration in the study of the Scriptures. The Reformers, every one of them, were students of the Word before all other things. Is it any wonder that when ministers and laymen go back to it, and study

it closely, and bring it before the people in all its native glow and searching force, there should be great heart-searching, that old things should pass away, and all things should become new? All the men who have become prominent as successful evangelists have aroused themselves with the Scriptures. *Bishop Hurst.*

3. With strength in my soul. This was a true answer to his prayer. If the burden was not removed, yet strength was given wherewith to bear it, and this is an equally effective method of help. It may not be best for us that the trial should come to an end; it may be far more to our advantage that by its pressure we should learn patience. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and our prudent Father in heaven will not deprive us of those benefits. Strength imparted to the soul is an inestimable boon; it means courage, fortitude, assurance, heroism. By his Word and Spirit the Lord can make the trembler brave, the sick whole, the weary bright. *S.*

4. They have heard the sayings of Thy mouth. Not merely one king, though that king be David, shall acknowledge, thank, and praise Thee, but all others who receive the true religion, when they know what Thou hast promised, and especially when they compare the promise and fulfilment with particular reference to the promise of Messiah, which is described in Scripture as a grand means for the conversion of the nations and the chiefs which represent them.

5. And they shall sing in the ways of Jehovah, for great (shall be) the glory of Jehovah. The kings of the earth, representing its nations, shall join in the praise of the true God, walking in His ways, *i.e.*, as converts to the true religion. Compare Mic. 4 : 2; Isa. 4 : 3. *A.*

6. He hath respect unto the lowly. Give me the homely vessel of humility, which God shall preserve and fill with the wine of His grace, rather than the varnished cup of pride, which He will dash in pieces like a potter's vessel. Where humility is the cornerstone, there glory shall be the topstone. *W. Secker.*—Pride is the growth of blindness and darkness; humility, the product of light and knowledge; and while the former has its origin in a mistaken and delusive estimate of things, the latter is as much the offspring of truth as it is the parent of virtue. *R. Hall.*—Let us aspire after true greatness, that is only found in humility. God rebukes the proud even in this world, and in the world to come they are abased; but the humble, even in this life, shall receive the respect that they have not sought

for, and eternal glory shall be the recompense of their contempt of false and perishing honors. *Fénelon.*

8. The Lord will perfect. God's work is perfect, man's is clumsy and incomplete. God does not leave off till He has finished. When He rests, it is because, looking on His work, He sees it all "very good." If you and I have been changed from enemies into sons, and have one spark of love to God kindled in our hearts, that is a mightier change than any that yet remains to be effected in order to make us perfect. One grain has been changed, the whole mass will be in due time. *A. M.*—None of God's designs break in the middle or fall short of their end. *He will perfect that good work which He hath begun, to the day of Jesus Christ* (Phil. 1 : 6). And how often is He called the strength of those that trust on Him; their buckler, and His way perfect. *He performeth all things for me* (Psalm 57 : 2). Hence is the stability of grace and perseverance of the saints; it is founded upon His unchangeableness. Not that they are so, though truly sanctified, if they and their graces were left to their own management; no, it is He who not only gives that rich portion to those He adopts to be His children, but keeps it for them, and them in the possession of it. And to build that persuasion of perseverance upon His truth and power engaged in it is no presumption; yea, it is high dishonor to Him to question it. . . . Put all your trust in the special and singular mercy of God, that He, for His mercy's sake, and of His only goodness, will help and bring you to perfection; not that absolute perfection is attainable here, but the meaning is, to high degrees of that spiritual and Divine life which is always growing and tending toward the absolute perfection above; but in some persons comes nearer to that and riseth higher, even here, than in the most. If you, with hearty and fervent desires, do continually wish and long for it, and with most humble devotion daily pray unto God and call for it, and with all diligence do busily labor and travel to come to it, undoubtedly it shall be given you. *Leighton.*

When we find that Christ hath by His Spirit begun to make us know God, and love Him, and delight in Him, and praise Him, it is the easier to make us believe that He will perfect His work in us. It is God's work to love them that love Him, and to reward the obedient; and I must needs believe that God will do His work, and will never fail the just expectations of any creature. All my doubt is whether I shall do my part, and whether I shall be a pre-

pared subject for that felicity. And He that resolveth this, resolveth all ; He that will make me fit for heaven hath overcome the greatest difficulty of my belief, and I should the more easily believe that He will do the rest, and that I shall surely come to heaven when I am fit for it. *Baxter.*

Many a Christian who thinks he is not growing at all may be growing in the most important sense of the word. He that is growing more acquainted with the weakness, and the sinfulness, and the waywardness of his own heart is no doubt thinking that he is going back, but he may be really making preparation for going forward in the noblest sense of that word. We may be growing downward in lowly humility, not less important in its place than growing upward in conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Crumming.—When we think we are growing worse we may actually be growing better, and making no little progress when we seem to be making none. Be not cast down ! Progression is the ordinary law of God's government. It is minute by minute that morn's gray dawn brightens up into perfect day ; it is inch by inch and foot by foot that the tide comes creeping in on the shore. And not like justification, an act, our sanctification, being a work of God's free grace, is under the same law of progress. More or less rapid, it is a thing of steps and stages. Therefore, while praying earnestly and working diligently, live hopefully and wait patiently. He will perfect that which concerneth us, and one day bring forth the headstone with " shoutings of grace, grace unto it." *Guthrie.*

God has a plan concerning every one of us. Our lives do not move on at haphazard, neither are they altogether shaped by our own choice ; but the Lord had a purpose in bringing us into being, and is directing our lives toward the fulfilment of that purpose. His purpose toward the work of His hands is always good. We can, indeed, frustrate the moral end of our creation by our perversity and sin ; but if we adapt ourselves in obedience and submission to the will of God, He will *perfect* that which concerneth us. He will not abandon His own plan. It matters nothing that He is so great and high, and we so insignificant ; He who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the air, and watches over the minutest laws and processes of the physical universe, thinks upon His children with a Father's watchful and forecasting love. When we find ourselves in trouble, we may not infer that God has forsaken or forgotten us. Our path may lie through the sea, but He will make the waters as a wall upon the right hand

and the left. Our way may lead through the valley of the shadow of death, but He will go with us ; His rod and staff will comfort us. The very troubles of life—disciplining our hearts to a loftier faith, separating us from a worldly unto a spiritual life—may be a means of perfecting that which concerneth us in the wise and holy purpose of God. So the Psalmist had already found it. His troubles had brought him experiences of the merciful faithfulness of God, so rich and blessed, that the fulfilment of the Divine promise even exceeded the hopes based upon His glorious name. So let the remembrance of past mercies lead us to praise and trust Him whose ways toward us are perfect, and whose mercy endureth forever. J. P. T.

By the discipline of daily life, by the ministry of sorrow and joy, by merciful chastisements dogging our steps when we stray, by duties and cares, by the teaching of His Word coming even closer to our hearts and quickening our consciences to discern evil where we had seen none, as well as kindling in us desires after higher and rarer goodness, by the reward of enlarged perceptions of duty and greater love toward it, with which He recompenses lowly obedience to the duty as yet seen, by the secret influences of His Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind breathed into our waiting spirits, by the touch of His own sustaining hand and glance of His own guiding eye, He will reveal to the lowly soul all that is yet wanting in its knowledge, and communicate all that is lacking in character. So for us, the true temper is confidence in His power and will, an earnest waiting on Him, a brave forward, yearning hope blended with a lowly consciousness of imperfection which is a spur, not a clog, and vigorous increasing efforts to bring into life and character the fulness and beauty of God. Presumption should be as far from us as despair ; the one because we have not already attained, the other because " God will reveal even this unto us." Only let us keep in mind the caution which the apostle, knowing the possible abuses which might gather round His teaching, has here attached to it, " Nevertheless"—though all which I have been saying is true, it is only true on this understanding—" whereto we have already attained, by the same let us walk." God will perfect that which concerneth you if—and only if—you go on as you have begun, if you make your creed a life, if you show what you are. If so, then all the rest is a question of time. Begin with humble trust in Christ, and a process is commenced which has no natural end short of that great hope with which this prom-

ise is charged, that the change which begins in the deepest recesses of our being, and struggles slowly and with many interruptions into partial visibility in our character, shall one day triumphantly irradiate our whole nature out to the very finger tips, and "even the body of our humiliation shall be fashioned like unto the body of Christ's glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." A. M.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever. God's work in us will abide unto perfection because God's mercy toward us thus abideth. "*Forsake not the works of Thine own hands.*" Our confidence does not cause us to live without prayer, but encourages us to pray all the more. Since we have it written upon our hearts that God will perfect His work in us, and we see it also written in Scripture that His mercy changeth not, we with holy earnestness entreat that we may not be forsaken. If there be anything good in us, it is the work of God's own hands; will He leave it? He who has gone so far will surely persevere with us to the end. Our hope for the final perseverance of the believer lies in the final perseverance of the believer's God. S.

There is already a power at work within us, if we be Christians, of whose workings we may be aware, and from them forecast the measure of the gifts which it can bestow upon us. We may estimate what will be by what we know has been and by what we feel is. That is to say, in other words, the effects already produced and the present operations of that power carry in them the pledge of their own completion. The strange mingling of good and evil in our present nature, our aspirations so crossed and contradicted, our resolution so broken and falsified, the gleams of light, and the eclipses that follow—all these, in their opposition to each other, are plainly transitory, and the workings of that power within us, though they be often overborne, are as plainly the stronger in their nature, and meant to conquer and to endure. The whole threefold Divine cause of our salvation supplies the measure and lays the foundation for our hopes in the glory of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Holy Ghost. Let us lift up our cry: "Perfect that which concerneth me, forsake not the works of Thine own hands," and we shall have for answer the ancient Word fresh as when it sounded long ago from among the stars to the sleeper at the ladder's foot, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." A. M.

The hand of God is in everything. No point

is more distinct to a trustful, relying spirit, no truth is more settled than this. There are no fortuities in this world; there is not an event which has not its meaning, its connections, and its end. The confidence which gives peace, and fixedness, and strength to the mind fastens upon the views which the Bible gives of God, His agency, and His purposes; as a God who is concerned with everything and who acts in everything in reference to an end worthy of Himself. The Word of God, in which faith rests, contemplates man in all the various circumstances of his being, in every possible or supposable condition in which he may be placed. The promise of a Saviour and of all good in Him covers all our interests; hence the Word which is given to us is full of promises, and they are "exceeding great and precious"—great in their range, because there is no circumstance which they do not reach; precious in their character, because there is no exigency in our affairs to which they are not adapted. All these promises are promises in Christ Jesus, and herein we have the evidence of their certainty, the assurance of their fulfilment. The Christian's confidence has been actually tested by experiment, and has never yet failed. Confidence in God always ministers peace and joy to the human spirit. In the last hour nothing but confidence in God will help us; and herein we have an illustration of the value and glory of this confidence, that it can and does sustain the spirit and give it in this hour perfect peace. That hour is just before us; it will not be long before we shall be passing through it. Happy is the man who can say with calmness and composure, in view of such a scene, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Faith, simple confidence in God through Christ, can give a man strength and peace in such a scene as this, and nothing else can do it. E. M.

The Word of God consecrates home joy, and yet reminds us that every garden has its grave, every dear union its separation. But, on the other hand, there are no utterances of unbearable grief, or unmitigated woe. It says ever to us, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide. And the facts of experience in every age endorse its truth. As the snows hide flowers even in the Alps, so beneath all our separations and sorrows there are still plants of the Lord, peace, and hope, and joy, and rest in Him. Blessed indeed shall we be if we can rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. We, too, shall all change. Time and sorrow will write their experiences on our brow. There will be hours in which we feel like Naomi, empty, oh! so empty—the cup of

affection poured out on the ground, the forest without its songsters, the garden without its flowers, the home without its familiar faces. We shall see these pictures every day, and wonder more and more how any hearts can do without a Brother and a Saviour in Jesus Christ. But if character be enriched and trained, all is well ; for this very end have we had Divine discipline, and the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us for the highest ends of eternal life in Him. *W. M. Statham.*

Blessed, indeed, is his lot over whom, regenerate, loving, and grateful, is heard the Father's assurance : All things are yours. All things shall work together for thy good. Nothing shall be able to separate thee from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. The earth, with all its adornments, treasures, and privileges, may well be dear as thy Father's work and as one of the outlying fields to His heavenly home. But in addition to a share of His bounties here there awaits thee a better portion hereafter and in the world beyond. *W. R. Williams.*

Nothing is lost. Patient waitings, cheerful sacrifices, still-born plans and baffled hopes, are all remembered. God gathers up and will fulfil in His best way. Life is what character has made it ; it depends on the decision we make between the claims of the seen and the unseen worlds, pleasure and duty, inclination and principle. Truth is but a means to an end, and knowledge is to be translated into character. The unseen spiritual realm is to be our daily dwelling-place. Turn your eye to Christ, and in His light discover the lines of your destiny. He came to minister and not to be ministered to ; to give rather than to receive. Take His burden and yoke. Keep Him in view amid the glamour and mirage of life, as an Alpine peak rises at evening in tender beauty and clear glory, when darkness has deepened about its base. It is morning now, but the night cometh, when the shadows will fall. Then let the glory of the cross shine full and clear before your eye, and nothing remain between you and heaven. V

PSALM CXXXIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known
<i>me.</i></p> <p>2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine
uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.</p> <p>■ Thou searchest out my path and my lying
down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.</p> <p>4 For there is not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.</p> <p>5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me.</p> <p>6 <i>Such</i> knowledge is too wonderful for me ;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.</p> <p>7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit ?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence ?</p> <p>8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there :
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art
there.</p> <p>■ If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ;</p> <p>10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,</p> | <p>And thy right hand shall hold me.</p> <p>11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me,
Then the night shall be light about me ;</p> <p>12 Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day :
The darkness and the light are both alike <i>to</i>
<i>thee.</i></p> <p>13 For thou didst form my reins :
Thou hast knit me together in my mother's
womb.</p> <p>14 I will give thanks unto thee ; for I am fear-
fully and wonderfully made :
Wonderful are thy works ;
And that my soul knoweth right well.</p> <p>15 My frame was not hidden from thee,
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts
of the earth.</p> <p>16 Thine eyes did see mine unformed sub-
stance,
And in thy book were all <i>my members</i> writ-
ten,</p> |
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Which day by day were fashioned,
 When as yet there was none of them.
 17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto
 me, O God !
 How great is the sum of them !
 18 If I should count them, they are more in
 number than the sand :
 When I awake, I am still with thee.
 19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God :
 Depart from me therefore, ye bloodthirsty
 men.
 20 For they speak against thee wickedly,

And thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.
 21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate
 thee ?
 And do not I loathe those that rise up against
 thee ?
 22 I hate them with perfect hatred :
 I count them mine enemies.
 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart :
 Try me, and know my thoughts :
 24 And see if there be any way of wickedness
 in me,
 And lead me in the way everlasting.

THIS remarkable Psalm has been justly admired in all ages for its view of the spiritual nature and perfections of God, especially of His omniscience and omnipresence. Noticeably, these are thought of and presented here, not in their abstract nature and relations, but in their personal relations and bearings upon "me," the writer, and myself—each singer and reader of this Psalm. The God of David, the God of the ancient Hebrew worship, was no mere abstraction, no impersonal universality, to be thought of only as infinitely distant and infinitely regardless of man or of man's moral life and real welfare. The Psalm before us is a lesson on these points. Though ascribed to David, its style, choice of words and the peculiar sense sometimes given them are thought to indicate strongly the age of the restoration. The basis of the Psalm being David's, it may have been modified in these respects by those who in the age of Ezra revised it for greater practical usefulness. C.

The one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm is a composition among the most remarkable in the collection ; fraught with the loftiest conceptions of God, breathing profound and ardent devotion, uniting the most awakening thoughts with the most finished outward form, winged for the highest flight of the imagination, and yet conveying impressive practical lessons—a favorite hymn in the past ages of the Jewish and Christian churches, and furnishing the germ of some of the most sublime lyric poems in all Christian languages. B. B. E.

Nowhere are the great attributes of God—His omniscience, His omnipresence, His omnipotence—set forth so strikingly as they are in this magnificent Psalm. Nowhere is there a more overwhelming sense of the fact that man is beset and compassed about by God, pervaded by His Spirit, unable to take a step without His control ; and yet nowhere is there a more em-

phatic assertion of the personality of man as distinct from, not absorbed in the Deity. Man is here the workmanship of God, and stands in the presence and under the eye of One who is his Judge. The power of conscience, the sense of sin and of responsibility, are felt and acknowledged, and prayer is offered to One who is not only the Judge, but the Friend ; to One who is feared as none else are feared, who is loved as none else are loved. Both in loftiness of thought and in expressive beauty of language the Psalm stands pre-eminent, and it is not surprising that Aben-Ezra should have pronounced it to be "the crown of all the Psalms."

The Psalm both in the Hebrew and the LXX is ascribed to David. In some copies of the latter it is also said to be a Psalm of Zechariah, with the further addition by a second hand of the words, "In the dispersion," which Origen tells us he found in some manuscripts. Theodoret, on the other hand, says that he had not found the addition either in the Hebrew or the LXX, or in any of the other interpreters. The strongly Aramaic coloring of the language certainly makes it more probable that the Psalm was written after the exile than before, unless, indeed, this tendency to Aramaisms is to be regarded as evidence of a variation merely of dialect, perhaps the dialect of Northern Palestine—a supposition which seems not to be wholly without foundation. The rhythmical structure is, on the whole, regular. There are four strophes, each consisting of six verses ; the first three strophes containing the proper theme of the Psalm, and the last the expression of individual feeling. In the first strophe the poet dwells on the omniscience of God, as manifested in His knowledge of the deepest thoughts and most secret workings of the human heart (vs. 1-6). In the second, on His omnipresence ; inasmuch as there is no corner of the universe so remote that it is not pervaded

by God's presence, no darkness so deep that it can hide from His eyes (vs. 7-12). The third strophe gives the reason for the profound conviction of these truths of which the poet's heart is full. No wonder that God should have so intimate a knowledge of man, for man is the creature of God, the mysterious beginnings of life, which none can trace; the days, all of which are ordered before the first breath is drawn—these are fashioned and ordered by the hand of God (vs. 13-18). In the last strophe the Psalmist turns abruptly aside to express his utter abhorrence of wicked men—an abhorrence, no doubt, deepened by the previous meditation on God and His attributes, and called forth probably by the circumstances in which he was placed; and then closes with a prayer that he himself may, in his inmost heart, be right with that God who has searched him and known him and laid His hand upon him, and that he may be led by Him in the way everlasting (vs. 19-24). P.

1-4. The opening verses assert the most comprehensive and exact knowledge of the individual man in all the conditions and activities of his outer and inner life. *De Witt.*

2. *Thou knowest my sitting and my rising; Thou understandest as to my thought from afar.* Sitting and rising or standing represent rest and motion, or all the various conditions of the living, waking man. In every posture, state, and occupation, Thou knowest me. The next phrase does not merely signify, Thou perceivest the meaning of my thought, but Thou knowest all about it—its origin, its tendency, its moral quality; *Thou understandest* (everything) *respecting it.* *From afar,* unimpeded by local distance, by which men are prone to imagine the Divine omniscience to be circumscribed. A.

Thou understandest my thought afar off—that is, every thought, though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day. The Divine knowledge reaches to their source and fountain before they are our thoughts. *Charnock.*—In all affliction, in all business, a man's best comfort is this, that all he does and even all he thinks, God knows. In the Septuagint we read "reasonings." God knows all our inner reasoning, all the colloquies of the soul with itself. *Le Blanc.*

3. *My path and my lair Thou sittest, and with all my ways art acquainted.* Path is here put for going, lair for lying, and these, like the terms of the preceding verse, for motion and rest, or the active and passive parts of human life. The poetical word *lair* is used to repre-

sent a Hebrew one, occurring only here, but the verbal root of which is used by Moses (Lev. 18 : 23 ; 20 : 16). The last verb means to be accustomed, and then by a natural association acquainted or familiar. *My ways,* my condition and my conduct, what I do and what I suffer. A.

3, 4. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step and every by-step. He is *acquainted with all our ways*; He knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk toward, what company we walk with. *Thou knowest me in all my retirements*; Thou knowest *my lying down*; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day, and composing myself to rest. *There is not a word in my tongue,* not a vain word, not a good word, *but Thou knowest it altogether*; knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken yet checked and kept in, but Thou knowest it. H.

God knows everything that passes in our inmost souls better than we do ourselves; He reads our most secret thoughts; and He is as perfectly employed in the scrutiny of the thoughts and actions of an individual, as in the regulation of the most important concerns of the universe. God knows everything perfectly, and He knows everything perfectly at once. This, to a human understanding, would breed confusion; but God, without confusion, beholds as distinctly the actions of every man, as if that man were the only created being, and the Godhead were solely employed in observing him. *Henry Kirke White.*—Would men speak so vainly if they considered God overheard them? Latimer took heed to every word in his examination when he heard the pen go behind the hangings; so, what care would persons have of their words if they remembered God heard, and the pen is going in heaven! *Watson.*

Do we sufficiently think what is meant by the proposition, God knows us? It cannot be perfect knowledge, an *all knowing* of all that we are, unless there be an ever-present spiritual beholding, a constant, actual knowing of our knowledge, and thinking of our thoughts. It is an idea most precious as well as fearful. Who is so unthinking as not to be sometimes impressed with that great mystery of our spiritual being, his own utter isolation from an all-surrounding universe? How perfect the seclusion in which every individual finite soul dwells apart from every other! We do, indeed, hold an imperfect intercourse by telegraphic signals

passing through matter, but walls of adamant could not more effectually separate us from direct spiritual communion than the state in which God has created us. There is something impressively solemn in this deep seclusion, this everlasting loneliness. No other soul knows us; no other finite spiritual eye has ever seen us. The most unthinking must have some experience of this. There are times when we are lonesome, insupportably lonesome, and then is it fear, or joy, or are they both combined in the thought that there is, indeed, One who does thus know us? It may startle us when we think of all that is to be seen, and more, perhaps, than our own inner sense has ever seen, in that deep dwelling of our spirituality; truly is there pain, but this is not the only feeling; there may be consolation in the thought, yea, even strength and joy. There is one soul that knows us, personally, intimately, thoroughly—knows us not by media, by signals outward or interior, not by induction from effects, or by foreknowledge from causes, but by direct and immediate presence, by more than presence, even by spirit-pervading, interpenetrating spirit—not only an occasional or partial beholding, but an unintermitted knowledge of our *all*, our sense, our memory, our intelligence, our consciousness, even when least sensible, least known, least conscious to ourselves. *T. Lewis.*

Our Christian friends watch us, our unchristian enemies watch us, angels in heaven watch us, and the devils that roam the earth watch us, but none watch us like God. We do not see Him as He stands by our side; the great observer of us is invisible and His scrutiny a silent one; we think not of Him, but He marks every one of us every hour with the most searching attention. He listens to our words, acquaints Himself with our doings, follows us wherever we go. We cannot for one moment get away from His eye. And all this while He is not taking a merely superficial glance at us; He is searching our inmost hearts, looking us through and through. *C. Bradley.*

5. *Thou hast beset me behind and before.* What would you say if, wherever you turned, whatever you were doing, whatever thinking, whether in public or private, with a confidential friend telling your secrets, or alone planning them—if, I say, you saw an eye constantly fixed on you, from whose watching, though you strove ever so much, you could never escape, that could perceive your every thought? The supposition is awful enough. There is such an Eye. *De Vere.*

That we should be so little checked, so little

awed, in the course of our daily lives, by this perpetual and awful presence; that we should know God to be looking at every motion and every impulse, and should be so unmoved; that we should do so many things before God's face which the opening of a door and the entrance of a fellow-creature would instantly stop—this is an instance of that weakness of faith which proves the fall of man. There is no need to exaggerate in this matter. We may recognize to the full that it is a part of God's own ordinance that we should be, as it were, unconscious of His presence during the greater part of every day of our lives. But that which is quite peculiar in this case is the nature of the forgetfulness. In the presence of father or of mother, or of any one else for whom you care, though you forget, yet the slightest real temptation, still more the slightest open sin, is sure to put you instantly in remembrance. Now I fear there is no such perpetual readiness in us to remember the presence of God. We forget His presence in the absorption of our daily employments and amusements; and forgetting it, we approach some sin which we know that He has forbidden. But our approach to the forbidden path rarely puts us in mind of the awful eye that is ever silently marking our steps. This is a veil which the devil puts before our eyes. It is the blindness of our fallen state. The right state of mind plainly is to have the thought of God's presence so perpetually at hand that it shall always start before us whenever it is wanted. This perpetual, though not always conscious sense of God's presence would, no doubt, if we would let it have its perfect work, gradually act on our characters just as the presence of our fellow-men does. This habit, beyond all others, strengthens our faith. *Bishop Temple.*

We ought to live and learn to live all day long with the thought that God's eye is upon us, if for no other reason, for this one alone—that this is the truth, that this is the real condition under which we must live. The thought of God's eye upon us is usually looked upon as a thought to restrain and bridle us in the hour of temptation and carelessness; and so it is. But with our selfish love of forbidden things we miss what is meant not merely to restrain us, but to be the greatest and most unfailing of our comforts. The thought that God sees us always is His great encouragement and help to His children in doing right. His eye is not the eye of a Judge and Ruler only, but of a Shepherd and Father, the Lover of the souls of men, these poor souls of ours and of our brethren,

not sparing even His own Son for them. We are being watched by an eye of tenderness and sympathy deeper and truer than even that of any man on earth for his suffering friend. *Church.*

7-10. Passing now from God's all-perfect knowledge to His universal presence, he would fain represent this by supposing all imaginable ways of escape from it. "If I were to mount up to heaven, Thou art there; or make Sheol my bed, thou art there." If I say, "I will take the wings of dawn; let me dwell in the farthest sea; even there Thy hand would lead me; Thy right hand would hold me fast." C.—"Suppose I should think of getting out of Thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of Thee; suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to Thee, or of disowning a dependence on Thee, and of shifting for myself; alas! whither can I go?" A heathen could say, *Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt see God meeting thee.* (Seneca.) H.

7. Inasmuch as the spirit in man is the seat of understanding, the Psalmist transfers the same to God; which is clearer from the second member, where the word *face* (*presence*) is put for knowledge or sight. The Psalmist is employed with the practical truth that by no change of place or circumstance can man escape from the eye of God. There is further implied, too, in the thought of *escape*, and in the thought of *darkness*, a sense of sin and the terror of an awakened conscience, which of itself would lead a man to hide himself, if it were possible, from his Maker. *Calvin.*

Even the sacred Scriptures instruct us to seek the omnipresent Deity first within the sanctuary of our own bosom. Is it not the consciousness of the inward presence of Jehovah, which led the Psalmist to say, Whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit? It was the Spirit, the face of Jehovah, which accompanied the Psalmist in all places; he was conscious of this Spirit abiding within him, whether he should ascend toward heaven or make his bed in hell; this Spirit who reproveth men for sin, this Divine countenance which looketh upon men with flaming eyes, went with the Psalmist wherever he went. *Tholuck.*

Thy presence. The presence of God's glory is in heaven; the presence of His power on earth; the presence of His justice in hell; and the presence of His grace with His people. If He deny us His powerful presence, we fall into nothing; if He deny us His gracious presence, we fall into sin; if He deny us His merciful presence, we fall into hell. *John Mason.*—

We never shall escape from omnipresence. There is no fleeing from a being who is everywhere and who is omnipotent. The old Latin proverb says, "If you wish to flee from God, flee to God." For the only way to flee from an omnipotent being, and an omnipresent one, is to flee to Him. *J. Cook.*

In all lands and coasts it is His sun that shines, His elements of earth or water that bear us, His air we breathe; but it is our special privilege that His gracious presence is ever with us; that no sea is so broad as to divide us from His favor; that wheresoever we feed, He is our host; wheresoever we rest, the wings of His blessed providence are stretched over us. Let my soul be sure of this. *T. Adams.*—What the atmosphere is to the physical life, that a sense of the Divine omnipresence is to secret prayer. Ambition, self-interest, the love of enterprise, as motives, in some of the greatest crises of life, ebb from under the soul and leave it stranded; a sense of the Divine omnipresence is the only motive that wears, and that is capable of flooding the highest harbor bar of temptation, and carrying the soul fully out to sea. *J. Cook.*

8. *Thou art there.* Or, more emphatically and impressively in the original, "*Thou!*" That is, the Psalmist imagines himself in the highest heaven, or in the deepest abodes of the dead—and lo! God is there also; He has not gone from *him!* he is still in the presence of the same God! *Barnes.*

The effort to *see God* about us is of the highest practical moment. There is no one perhaps who has not known the value of the thought, *Thou, God, seest me;* but this *seeing God* is something more. *That* is a safeguard, but *this* is strength; *that* keeps us from doing, but *this* arms us to do; *that* suggests the presence of a Judge, but *this* the presence of a Redeemer. And in the common details of life it is *this*, the conviction of the nearness of God to help us, which we want above all things. We pray languidly, expecting little; we take the gifts and the trials which come to us for the most part as a matter of course; we are like the nine lepers who made their petition and received their answer, without actually knowing that the petition was addressed to a present God, and that the answer came directly from Him. But when the better way is opened let us boldly enter upon it, and claim, like the Samaritan, to see the personal love of God in the action of His providence. *Bishop Westcott.*

Sheol—"asking, demanding, insatiable"—is used of the realm of death, *i.e.*, the place of

departed spirits, to which all go alike, whether good or bad. The word "Sheol" occurs sixty-five times in the Hebrew Scriptures; and in sixty-one of these it is translated Hades in the Septuagint Greek version, and four times by *thanatos*, i.e., death. It is sometimes (but only *poetically*) used for *geber* or *qibrah*—"a grave." *Hades* is the "unseen," invisible world of spirits, to which all alike go, whether good or bad. It is thus (practically) identical with Sheol. In the New Testament *Gehenna* is literally "the valley of Hinnom," which was used by the Jews as a place to consume refuse in, or filth of any kind; hence the word was subsequently used to express, figuratively, the utmost degree of *severity and opprobrium* to which the wicked in Sheol or Hades are exposed. *Tartarus* is only referred to in 2 Pet. 2:4, and is adopted (apparently) from the heathen mythology, where it stands related to Hades, just as *Gehenna*, in Jewish theology, does to Sheol. In short, then, all souls, without exception, go to Sheol or Hades, while the wicked alone go to *Gehenna* or *Tartarus*. *R. Young.*

10. Thy hand lead me, hold me.

We need not fear the omnipresence of love, nor the omniscience which knows us altogether, and loves us even as it knows. Rather we shall be glad that we are ever in His presence, and desire, as the height of all felicity and the power for all goodness, to walk all the day long in the light of His countenance, till the day come when we shall receive the crown of our perfecting in that we shall be "ever with the Lord." *A. M.*

12. *The darkness darkeneth not from Thee,* for there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open and barefaced villainies. *H.*

A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent, like the Deity. If we take to ourselves the wings of the morning and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, duty performed or duty violated is still with us, for our happiness or our misery. If we say the darkness shall cover us, in the darkness as in the light our obligations are yet with us. We cannot escape their power nor fly from their presence. They are with us in this life, will be with us at its close; and in that scene of inconceivable solemnity which lies yet farther onward, we shall still find ourselves surrounded by the consciousness of duty, to pain us wherever it has been vio-

lated, and to console us so far as God may have given us grace to perform it. *Daniel Webster.*

13-16. The fact that man is manifest to God even to the very root of his being and on every side is now accounted for by man's origin. The development of the child in the womb was looked upon by the Israelitish Chokma (Wisdom) as one of the greatest mysteries (Eccl. 11:5); here the poet sets forth this coming into being as a miracle of God's omniscient and omnipresent omnipotence. The reins are made specially prominent, in order to characterize them, the seat of the tenderest and most secret emotions, as the work of Him who trieth the heart and reins. *D.*

13. **My reins.** It seems to denote the sensational and emotional part of the human being, as afterward "the bones" denote the framework of the body. *P.*—The meaning of the first clause seems to be, Thou hast in Thy power and at Thy control the very seat of my strongest sensibilities, my pains and pleasures; and this subjection is coeval with my being, for even before birth I was under thy protection and command, as I am now. *A.*

Mine innermost being (Hebrew, *my reins, kidneys*), regarded in the Semitic psychology as the seat of the desires, affections, and all the deeper emotions that distinguish man's spiritual nature. The interior parts of the body represent the points through which, in one direction, the immortal spirit was supposed to express itself outwardly, and in the opposite direction, to be wrought upon by the Spirit of God. This reference lifts the whole following description above any gross material conceptions, as if the Psalmist were glorifying the wisdom and power of God, as exhibited in his physical constitution. It is not in the possession of a skilfully wrought body, with members adapted to his life on the earth, that man is "fearfully distinguished." The man and the beast are alike in having the heart, the reins, and all other material organs, performing their several functions with admirable perfection and fidelity. But this is the marvel of God's workmanship and the chief glory of man, that his perishable body is the seat and throne of spiritual and Divine endowments, and that the two diverse elements in his nature are woven together as one.

There is wrapped up in the embryonic condition of man not merely a body to be developed into wondrous symmetry, strength, and adaptation to temporary purposes, but an eternity of thought, feeling, fellowship with God, and spiritual activity and enjoyment. It is a fine thought of Hupfeld, that the "imperfect

substance is the yet undeveloped course of life, the days of which, in their continuity, are the thread, rolled up as in a ball, which is unwound as life goes on." Yet it is not his own thought, but that suggested by the most literal translation of the words of the Hebrew poet. *De Witt.*

14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Never was so terse and expressive a description of the physical conformation of man given by any human being. So "*fearfully*" are we made, that there is not an action or gesture of our bodies which does not, apparently, endanger some muscle, vein, or sinew, the rupture of which would destroy either life or health. We are so "*wonderfully*" made, that our organization infinitely surpasses, in skill, contrivance, design, and adaptation of means to ends, the most curious and complicated piece of mechanism not only ever executed "by art and man's device," but ever conceived by human imagination. *R. Warner.*

15. *Not hid was my frame from Thee, when I was made in secret, embroidered in depths of the earth.* The *not hid* is a meiosis, implying that God saw it clearly and fully understood it, inasmuch as He Himself created it. *Frame*, literally, *strength*, applied to the bones and sinews as the strength or framework of the body. *A.*

"Embroidered with great skill" is an accurate poetical description of the creation of veins, sinews, muscles, nerves, etc. What tapestry can equal the human fabric? This work is wrought as much in private as if it had been accomplished in the darkness of the abyss. The expressions are poetical, beautifully veiling, though not absolutely concealing the real meaning. *S.*

In every part, beauty, strength, convenience meet together. Neither is there any whereof our weakness cannot give reason why it should be no otherwise. How hast thou disposed of all the inward vessels, for all offices of life and nourishment! No vein, sinew, artery is idle. There is no piece in this exquisite frame, whereof the place, use, form, doth not admit wonder and exceed it. *Bishop II.*

But as yet we have spoken but of the casket wherein the jewel lieth. The soul, that Divine spark and blast, how quick, nimble, various, and indefatigable in its motions! how comprehensive in its capacities! how it animateth the body, and is like God Himself, all in every part! Who can trace the flights of reason? What a value hath God set upon the soul! He made it after His image, He redeemed it with Christ's blood. *Manton.*—What is it which unites soul and body? how do they touch?

how do they keep together? how is it we do not wander to the stars or the depths of the sea, or to and fro as chance may carry us, while our body remains where it was on earth? Certainly it is as uncomprehensible as anything can be, how soul and body can make up one man; and, unless we had the instance before our eyes, we should seem in saying so to be using words without meaning. For instance, would it not be extravagant and idle to speak of time as deep or high, or of space as quick or slow? Not less idle, surely, it perhaps seems to some races of spirits to say that thought and mind have a body, which in the case of man they have, according to God's marvellous will. *Newman.*

I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made—made immortal and spiritual like Thee, made to sustain conscious and most endearing relations to Thee, made wise by Thine unsearchable wisdom, made happy in Thine immediate presence, destined to an everlasting progress toward that great luminary, the faint irradiations of whose love now, in this distant world, are my song in my pilgrimage. *B. B. E.*

16. *My unformed substance did Thine eyes see, and in Thy book all of them are written, days are formed, and there is not one among them.* This is one of the most obscure and doubtful verses in the Book of Psalms. Its difficulty to our own translators may be gathered from the fact that *substance yet being unperfect* answers to a single Hebrew word, and that *my members* is a gratuitous addition to the text. The first word in Hebrew occurs only here, but is clearly derived from a verb which means to *roll* or *roll up* (2 Kings 2 : 8), and may therefore be supposed itself to signify something rolled up or rolled together, and from this may be deduced the sense of something shapeless or unformed, or more specifically that of an embryo. The next difficulty lies in the expression *all of them*, evaded in the English Bible by changing it to *all my members* and then making this the subject of the plurals following. The best interpreters are now disposed to construe *all of them* with *days*. In Thy book all of them are written—namely, all my days, as they were planned, projected, or decreed, before as yet one of them had really existed. *Written* and *formed* are then parallel expressions. *All of them are written, days are delineated or depicted.* By *days* (translated in our Bible *in continuance*) we are then to understand not merely the length but the events and vicissitudes of life. This is one of those cases in which the difficulty lies in the

particular expressions, while the general import of the passage is clearly determined by the context. A.

Man, in the very rudiments of existence, is a miracle of design. The threads of a strange embroidery are shot through the wondrous woof where life sleeps folded in its ante-natal cell. The Divine Artificer sees that which is rolled up in the embryo. And while He sees it, the days fitted for its development are outlined before His gaze, as the sculptor knows what shape will come from the unhewn block, as the architect has the outline of his work before him. God's mind is God's book. There is a secret laboratory, where birth as a natural fact, and creation as a supernatural fact, coincide. The point of reconciliation we cannot find. We see but broken segments of the perfect arch. The womb is as mysterious as the grave. Birth shrouds its secrets with a veil as impenetrable as death. But the revelation which throws some radiance upon the sombre mystery of life's close flings back, in this Psalm, one ray at least upon the portal of its beginning. *Bishop Alexander.*

17, 18. God is everywhere present, in the vastness of the upper heavens, in the remotest recesses of Sheol, everywhere, to the utmost borders of the material universe; but these affirmations of a universal truth are advanced in apposition to a truth which is more affecting, or which is of more intimate concernment to the devout spirit; this spirit, its faults, its terrors, its aspirations; and this animal frame, of which it is the tenant, is in the hand of God, and is dependent upon His bounty, and is cared for in whatever relates to its precarious welfare; and thus is so great a theme, the Divine omniscience, brought home to its due culmination in an outburst of religious feeling, How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with Thee. Whence came an idea of God so living, so real, so universal in its applications, so commanding in its power? Is not the book that contains it—a book into whose whole texture is woven this supernatural idea of God—is not this book a revelation of God to the soul of man? I. T.

17. He breaks off in wonder and admiration and holy thankfulness, as before in v. 14; these expressions of personal feeling lending not only much beauty and force, but also much reality to the contemplation of God's attributes. P. —*How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me,*

O God! How cold and poor are our warmest thoughts toward God! How unspeakably loving and gloriously rich are His thoughts toward us! Compare Eph. 1:18, "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Fausset.—God, who knew him, thought of him, and His thoughts toward him were thoughts of love; thoughts of good, and not of evil (Jer. 24:11). God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good. H.

When I awake; literally, "I have waked," i.e., as often as he awakes from sleep he finds that he is again in the presence of God, again occupied with thoughts of God, again meditating afresh with new wonder and admiration on His wisdom and goodness. P.—The thoughts of God were the first visitors he had in the morning. God and his heart met together as soon as he was awake, and kept company all the day after. Charnock.—It is no small advantage to the holy life to "begin the day with God." The saints are wont to leave their hearts with Him over night, that they may find them with Him in the morning. Before earthly things break in upon us, and we receive impressions from abroad, it is good to season the heart with thoughts of God. When the world gets the start of religion in the morning, it can hardly overtake it all the day; and so the heart is habituated to vanity all the day long. But when we begin with God, we take Him along with us to all the business and comforts of the day; which, being seasoned with His love and fear, are the more sweet and savory to us. Thomas Case.

19-24. The Psalm has an immediately practical aim, which is unfolded near the close. It is not an abstract description of the Divine attributes, with a mere indirect purpose in view. If God is such a being, if His vital agency reaches over all His creation, pervades all objects, illumines the deepest and darkest recesses; if His knowledge has no limits, piercing into the mysterious processes of creation, into the smallest and most elemental germs of life; if His eye can discern the still more subtle and recondite processes of mind, comprehending the half-formed conception, the germinating desire "afar off;" if, anterior to all finite existence, His predetermining decree went forth; if in those ancient records of eternity man's framework, with all its countless elements and organs, in all the ages of His duration, were inscribed—then for His servant, His worshipper on earth two consequences follow, most practi-

cal and momentous : *First*, the ceasing to have or feel any complacency with the wicked, any sympathy with their evil ways, any communion with them as such ; and, *secondly*, the earnest desire that God would search the Psalmist's soul, lest in its unsounded depths there might be some lurking iniquity, lest there might be, beyond the present jurisdiction of his conscience, some dark realm which the omniscient eye only could explore. For an earnest consideration of the all-pervading presence and all-comprehending knowledge of God would lead every thoughtful man to the profoundest humility and self-distrust, and to the wish that the searching light of heaven may explore all the dark corners of his soul. *B. B. Edwards.*

19. The prayer arises from the intense hatred of wickedness as wickedness, from the deep conviction that, if hateful to a true-hearted man, it must be still more intensely hateful to Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins. The soul, in the immediate presence of God, places itself on the side of God, against all that is opposed to Him. The Psalmists are profoundly convinced that their cause is right. They are sure that God is on their side. They hate evil with all their hearts, because they love God with all their hearts. But the question forces itself upon us, Are we justified ourselves in using these words? Is it right to pray, "Oh, that Thou wouldest slay the wicked, O God"? Are these words in harmony with the Christian conscience? Though there may be single expressions in the Psalter, imprecations and burning words, which are not suitable in Christian mouths, depend upon it that the whole strain of the Psalter, as sternly set against evil, is not opposed to the Christian conscience. The New Testament is not so entirely opposed to the spirit and teaching of the Old on this point as is sometimes asserted. The chief difference lies here, that in the New Testament we are taught to carry the endurance of wrong much further than was possible or conceivable before Jesus our Master set us an example that we should follow in His steps, and that we are taught by Him and His apostles what we are not taught distinctly by Psalmists and prophets : to distinguish between the sinner and the sin, between the wickedness which a man does and the man himself ; that we are to try and root out wickedness without rooting out the wicked from the earth ; that, with the patience of God, we are to bear with the evil and seek to reform the evil, even while we long to see it come to an end. We may not cherish a personal hatred ; we may not seek for a per-

sonal vengeance. But it is our bounden duty to hate wickedness and wicked characters with all our hearts. *P.*

20. *Take Thy name in vain.* If justice be wanting in our actions, or truth in our assertions and promises, they are vain ; and to use God's name in either is to take His name in vain. So that if either we take the name of God to no end, but make it common, and take it up as a custom till it come to a habit, not for any good end ; or if our hearts be not stable or fixed, but light and inconstant when we take it ; or if we take it to color or bolster up any falsehood or any unjust act, we take it in vain. *Lancelot Andrews.*

21. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? The simple future in the first clause comprehends several distinct shades of meaning. Do I not, may I not, must I not, hate those hating Thee? Hate them, not as man hates, but as God hates. *A.*—A good man hates, as God Himself doth ; he hates not the persons of men, but their sins ; not what God made them, but what they have made themselves. We are neither to hate the men on account of the vices they practise, nor to love the vices for the sake of the men who practise them. He who observeth invariably this distinction fulfilleth the perfect law of charity, and hath the love of God and of his neighbor abiding in him. *Bishop Horne.*

22. Is not my heart with Thee, O God, in all its sympathies? I hate Thy haters. As they are Thine enemies, so I count them mine. It does not seem to have entered for one moment into the Psalmist's theology that this spirit involves sinful vindictiveness. No doubt it seemed to him the most natural thing possible and the most righteous that his sympathies should flow in the same moral channel with God's ; that his heart should be perfectly at one with the heart and the interests of his benevolent Father. *C.*

Loving and seeking what is good means hating what is bad. There cannot be a genuine pursuit of purity and holiness combined with tolerance of evil, or a sneaking relish for it. The attempt to follow the right without absolutely breaking with the wrong is what leads to so many disastrous failures on the part of half-way Christians. There can be no real success or progress in the service and knowledge of God unless there is an attachment to it, a longing for it, so deep and strong that it involves what the Psalmist stoutly calls "perfect hatred" of them that hate God ; which means not only all persons, but all influences, associ-

ations, practices, indulgences and habits that are against God's will, and interrupt the soul's fellowship with Him. *New York Examiner.*

Determine to hate that which rises up in you against God—that first, that chiefly—and you will hate, along with your indifference, cowardice, meanness, all your conceit of your own poor judgment, your dislike of opposition to it, your unwillingness to have your thoughts probed to the quick. And so with this hatred, deeply and inwardly cherished, will come the true and not the imaginary charity, the genuine, not the bastard toleration. *Maurice.*

23. *Search me, God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts.* The last expression is emphatic, meaning even my most anxious and disturbed thoughts, into which corruption might most easily find entrance. In this verse he again appeals to the Divine omniscience for the purity of his intentions, and thus comes back to the point from which he started. *A.*

23, 24. One closing supplication : Since Thou, O God, knowest me so perfectly, I implore Thee to keep Thine eye evermore upon me ; reveal my heart truly to myself ; see if there be any way of mischief, way of wrong, in me ; and lead me in the way of life eternal. *C.*

Two kinds of hypocrisy—namely, that of deceiving the world and that of imposing on ourselves—are touched with wonderful beauty in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. The folly of the first kind of hypocrisy is set forth by reflections on God's omniscience and omnipresence. The other kind of hypocrisy, whereby a man deceives himself, is intimated in the two last verses, where the Psalmist addresses himself to the great Searcher of hearts in that emphatical petition, "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart ; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." *Addison.*

Let our outer life of word and look and deed be ever so fair before men, it is our inner life, the life of the spirit, the life of motive, thought and principle, that God searches and tries. It is comparatively easy to gain the reputation of goodness among men. But God looks not only at *what* we do, but *how* and *why* we do it. True religion is a religion of the heart, a religion of motives ; and it *must* be a religion of the heart because this can be the only education for heaven. *Tudor.*

The real prayer of life says, "Search me, O God, and try my heart—try me and know my *thought*, and see if there be any wicked way

within me, and lead me in the way everlasting." That prayer, fervently offered, never fails. It cuts off all unlawful requests and motives. It asks God to root out all self-will, to tame inordinate desire, to bring the human will into harmony with His own, and then to bestow what He sees good. Such a prayer stands on the broad foundation, "*Thy* will be done." *Armitage.*

"That man must have a rare confidence," says Calvin, "who offers himself so boldly to the scrutiny of God's righteous judgment." And then he remarks that such a prayer is no evidence of self-ignorance or a presumptuous spirit, but of integrity of heart and the absence of all hypocrisy. It is connected with what precedes in this way—that, having declared his utter separation from and aversion to the wicked, he prays that this may be no mere outward separation ; he remembers that, even while he seems most opposed to the wicked, the all-seeing eye may discern in him some way of evil and sorrow ; that only as God holds his hand and leads him can he walk in the way of life. *P.*

These words express an appeal to the omniscience of God in proof of the sincerity of the Psalmist's love to Him. There is a frank affection and candor about the words to which the heart of our own personal experience readily corresponds. They breathe the quiet repose of one speaking in confidence to another whom he trusts, and whom he is authorized to trust. The words express a single-hearted and undivided desire that nothing whatever may interpose between the soul and God, or interrupt the enjoyment of His presence. This second feeling is a necessary part of the first. Whatever there was in his heart, or in his thoughts, or in his manner and his conduct displeasing to God, and which prevented his walking in the way of everlasting life, that the Psalmist was prepared to give up, holding nothing back. His prayer implies a desire for holiness at any cost of discipline and chastisement, a wish to learn the lesson even though it should be beneath the rod, to get nearer to God even though the path should tear him away from all he loved below. *E. Garbett.*

This is the end of simple-hearted, sincere souls, in their appeals at a throne of grace, that, "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," they may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus the new creature appeals to the God of all grace to be searched, tried, and led. *W. Mason.*

The thoughts of this Psalm are presented in a gradually ascending series. The illustrations rise in a beautiful progression. God's ubiquity and unlimited knowledge are first illustrated by outward and, as it were, tangible allusions; then by the wonderful processes of creation, which no eye can pierce; then by those eternal decrees which accurately delineated all the organic structures that were to come into being; and finally, by the climax and crowning wonder of all, God's goodness to His frail and humble servants on earth, His thoughts of love inestimably precious, more in number than the sands on the sea-shore. Is it a matter of surprise that our path and our lying-down are environed by this great Being; that in our walks we never can be solitary or alone; that, free and independent as we may feel, we are evermore pressed upon by a personal and conscious existence; that in the highest heavens He is no more present than He is in the profoundest abyss; that it is His power which wings the earliest beam of the morning, and His wisdom which guides it on its adventurous course; that in the night with its rayless gloom He walks as in the blaze of day? Do not be astonished at this; there are *greater* mysteries, "for Thou hast created my reins." My bodily frame, fearfully and wonderfully made; that incipient organization, so faint, so minute, as to mock all investigation; that contexture so complicated; those threads so innumerable and so cunningly interwoven, animated by that impalpable breath, that subtle essence, which we call life—this is the most wonderful of all. Before this curious mechanism of thine, the splendor of the morning and the solemn pomp of night fade away. Wrapped up within thee are mysteries higher than thou couldst find in heaven, deeper than thou couldst discover in hell. Travel not, even in thy wish, to the ends of the earth to see God's wisdom; it is nigh thee, in thine own frame, in thy breathing life. Thou carriest about with thee treasures of knowledge which science can never explore. Thou art in thyself a proof of Divine skill, which the heaven and the earth cannot equal. Yet be not astonished at this. All these wondrous existences, with their ten thousand elements, organs, and ramifications, did not come by chance. They were arranged from all eternity. The model, the plan, all the minute specifications, if we may so say, were present with the Architect, were perfectly known long before time began. In His book thy members were written in the unfathomable depths of a past eternity. This predetermining resolve, this delineating decree,

was more astonishing than the power that executed it; the design more extraordinary than its accomplishment. God's consummate knowledge is shown, if possible, in greater perfection by the original conception than by the finishing act.

But more touching than all this stupendous knowledge, more impressive than all this unerring prescience, is the Divine *compassion*; God's *thoughts* toward them that fear Him, overflowing with love, uncounted in number. The greatest wonder in God is His condescension. His philanthropy, His fatherly benignity, His yearning tenderness, is the crowning grace, is the thought which comprehends and exhausts all others. Therefore inestimably dear are God's thoughts toward him! In all the stages of his being, in all his varied experience from the dawn of life, in helpless infancy onward, the Divine goodness has pursued him with unfaltering step; that goodness has lavished upon him its boundless stores; the Divine perfections have been, as it were, conspiring to mark him out as the object of unceasing and exuberant favor. B. B. E.

God's *omniscience* searching our inmost thoughts, knowing our hidden motives, scanning our most secret ways, should keep us in awe of sin. God's *omnipresence*, surrounding us continually, making it impossible for us, by darkness or by distance, to hide from His eye or escape from His hand, should at once dissuade us from evil, and encourage us to commit ourselves to His guidance, and trust in His love. That love surrounds us every moment with its precious thoughts—thoughts originating life, shaping its wondrous organism, providing for our sustentation, our culture, our enjoyment, filling the world with forms of beauty and resources of happiness; thoughts as inexhaustible as the desert of its sands, the sky of its stars, each separate grain a golden thought of love, each point of light a world, a constellation of glory. J. P. T.

God is in our life to be seen. He who can be seen nowhere with the bodily sight—whom we might follow and seek in vain through all the realms of space, whom we should never find on brightest mountain-tops, if they were transfigured with the light of Tabor, nor in solemn grove, nor in deepest forest shade, nor among the flowers of Eden, if Eden were restored; no! nor could we see Him in heaven itself if we were there; He can be seen and felt by the soul, by the spiritual perception, by that wonderful faculty called "faith," which is just our soul seeing God. By that faculty we can see

Him in all our earthly ways, at our right hand, at our left, behind, before, around, above, about our bed, about our path, in the field of labor, in the place of rest, in the flow of prosperity, in the ebb of adversity, in the sunshine of joy, in the darkness of sorrow, in the hardness of duty, in the sweetness of recompense, in the battle of life, in the conquering moment of death—God everywhere! God always! God forevermore! *A. Raleigh.*

Standing face to face with the unseen, there is, first of all, a keen and overpowering sense of the Divine personality. The starry spaces are awful, not as being boundless and empty, but as being swept forever by the vision and the breath of God. The only shadow anywhere is of sin. Self-impeachment begins just where and when self-consciousness begins. Till God has pardoned there is no peace. But when He pardons, we see new, great depths in Him, which His angels have never seen, and our little life lays holds on His for time and for eternity. Out of such experience come all the great Psalms, and hymns, and prayers, and meditations, and high discourse of all the Christian generations. *R. D. Hitchcock.*

One of the most obvious and direct inferences suggested by this Psalm is this, that meditation upon God's character, the intellectual contemplation of His attributes, should lead us to self-review and humiliation. This practical effect should not be confined merely to what are termed His *moral* attributes. We may indeed consider abstractly, and for scientific purposes, certain aspects of His nature, certain modes of His being, and denominate them natural or intellectual attributes. But in reality His being is one and indivisible. His nature is not separable into parts. All those states which we, on account of the imperfection of language, term qualities or characteristics, really coexist and cohere; they are very inadequate symbols to express a nature which is at once personal and boundless, a perfection whose moral and intellectual excellences can no more be separated than the exact edge or transition points in the colors of the rainbow. Such is the uniform representation of the Scriptures. They never teach us to gaze upon these attributes as intellectual propositions. The omniscience of God is a holy omniscience. The omnipresence of God is the presence of spotless holiness and infinite love. The power of God is the agent and executor of perfect righteousness. When, therefore, we look at any of the symbols of Divine agency around us, the practical effect should be lowly adoration and the deepest self-

abasement. The moon, walking in her brightness, is the teacher of moral purity. The stars in their courses, with sounds inaudible to our gross sense, whisper of the moral serenity of that Being who appointed them their circuits. The gorgeous apparitions in the western evening sky prefigure a realm whose pure light never fades away. All nature, all visible forms, all this wondrous mechanism of sky and earth, all the depths of our physical and immortal nature, speak not simply of abstract power and vast knowledge, nor simply of God's overflowing love, but by the law of contrast, by one of the most active principles of our nature, they lead us to feel our own impurity, our own helplessness, the fearful uncongeniality of *our* nature to that of Him with whom we have to do. What are *we*, that we should be placed in the midst of *such* glories? Why should defilement mar Divine purity? Why should beings so corrupt, with hearts so inclined to evil, with eyes blind to the moral beauty that is lavished all around, be permitted to deface what they cannot love and appreciate? "Search me and try my heart; by Thy cleansing power qualify me to live in a world radiant with the Divine perfections, to be an accepted worshipper in this pure temple, and to meditate, thoughtfully, on Thy uncreated glories!" this should be the spontaneous exclamation of every one who is permitted to turn aside and see this great sight. *B. B. E.*

Let no soul examine itself by any lower marks than this, *participation of the Divine nature, conformity to the Divine image.* Examine what alliance your soul has to God; "whose is the image and superscription;" for conformity to the image and will of God, that is religion; and that God will own for His, when all the counterfeits and shadows of it will disappear forever. Some are searching God's decretals to find their names written in the Book of Life, when they should be studying to find God's name written upon their hearts, "*Holiness to the Lord*" engraven upon their souls. Some are busy examining themselves by notes and marks without them, when they should labor to find the marks and prints of God and His nature upon them. Some have their religion in their books and authors, which should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart. Some glory in the bulk of their duties, and in the multitude of their religious performances and achievements, whereas it were much more excellent if they could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of Divine

beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. *Shaw.*

There are anatomists of piety who destroy all the freshness and vigor of faith and hope and charity by immuring themselves, night and day, in the infected atmosphere of their own bosoms. Let a man of warm heart, who is happily surrounded with the dear objects of the social affections, try the effect of a parallel practice; let him institute anxious scrutinies of his feelings toward those whom, hitherto, he has believed himself to regard with unfeigned love; let him use in these inquiries all the fine distinctions of a casuist, and all the profound analyses of a metaphysician, and spend hours daily in pulling asunder every complex emotion of tenderness that has given grace to the domestic life; and, moreover, let him journalize these examinations, and note particularly, and with the scrupulosity of an accomptant, how much of the mass of his kindly sentiments he has ascertained to consist of genuine love, and how much was selfishness in disguise; and let him, from time to time, solemnly resolve to be, in future, more disinterested and less hypocritical in his affection toward his family. What, at the end of a year, would be the result of such a process? What but a wretched debility and dejection of the heart, and a strangeness and a sadness of the manners, and a suspension of the native expressions and ready offices of zealous affection? Meanwhile, the hesitations and the musings, and the upbraidings of an introverted sensibility absorb the thoughts. Is it, then, reasonable to presume that similar practices in religion can have a tendency to promote the healthful vigor of piety?

By the constitution of the human mind its emotions are strengthened in no other way than by exercise and utterance; nor does it appear that the religious emotions are exempted from this general law. The Divine Being is revealed to us in the Scriptures as the proper and supreme object of reverence, of love, and of affectionate obedience; and the natural means of exercising and of expressing these feelings are placed before us, both in the offices of devotion and in the duties of life; just in the same way that the opportunities of enhancing the domestic affections are afforded in the constitution of social life. Why, then, should the Christian turn aside from the course of nature, and divert his feelings from their outgoings toward the supreme object of devotional sentiments, by instituting curious researches into the quality and quantity and composition of all his relig-

ious sensations? This spiritual hypochondriasis enfeebles at once the animal, the intellectual, and the moral life, and is usually found in conjunction with infirmity of judgment, infelicity of temper, and inconsistency of conduct. I. T.

It will generally be much better to just let God put us on such ways of discovery here as will be best for us. But this is not what most disciples go to self-examination, or by their teachers are put on self-examination for; they are set to it, not to find out their faults and correct them, but to settle and try out their Christian evidences. Evidences of piety are a great deal more likely to be hidden or ruled out in that way than they are to be found, and the most sensitively delicate disciple is the one that will suffer. On the other hand, when evidences are sought in this manner, that class of persons who are commonly finding what they look for, will be almost certain to fish up the evidences they want. This whole method of self-examination, to settle the question of Christian evidence, is deceptive, unscriptural, and bitterly injurious. It is injurious not only in misleading, but in hindering the disciple. A man does not want to examine himself to find whether he is cold or hungry, whether he loves his child, whether he is an honest man? No, the sturdy fact is that all such answers sought come and ought to come without seeking, and can only come of themselves in simply being true. The real wisdom of the Christian is that he shall not face round as he walks to examine the tracks he makes, but ask the way to Zion with his face thitherward. The thing wanted here, and that which only yields the true evidence, is the genuine downrightness of our life—that it covers no shams, gets up no mock virtues and no pretexts of proceeding scientifically, but goes right on, putting its face the way it goes, and not backward. It is consciously right, and God is consciously yielding it His immediate testimony. And let there be no doubt of this, as if it were a way not safe. God will make it safe as He only can. And if you are afraid that some looseness may creep in, or some false hope steal you away, be upon your watch, for watching is one thing and self-examination a very different thing. Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation, and let the prayer be this, which God will never disregard, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Then forward, forward in that way. *Bushnell.*

PSALM CXL.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 DELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man ;
Preserve me from the violent man :
2 Which imagine mischiefs in their heart ;
Continually do they gather themselves together for war.
3 They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent ;
Adders' poison is under their lips. [Selah]
4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked ;
Preserve me from the violent man :
Who have purposed to thrust aside my steps.
5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords ;
They have spread a net by the way side ;
They have set gins for me. [Selah]</p> <p>6 I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God :
Give ear unto the voice of my supplications,
O LORD.
7 O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.</p> | <p>8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked ;
Further not his evil device ; lest they exalt themselves. [Selah]
9 As for the head of those that compass me about,
Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
10 Let burning coals fall upon them :
Let them be cast into the fire ;
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
11 An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth :
Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him
12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
And the right of the needy.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name :
The upright shall dwell in thy presence.</p> |
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THIS Psalm is a prayer for protection against enemies who were at once violent and crafty and unscrupulous in the use of their tongues. The general strain of the Psalm is like that of many which occur in the earlier books, and like them it is ascribed to David. P.—From the Sauline persecution the images are evidently borrowed. Besides the warlike tone, the vigorous conciseness, the verbal agreements with Davidic Psalms combined with eminent originality, the very structure is Davidic, and exhibits the familiar sequence of complaint, prayer, and confident anticipation. A.—He complains here of serpent-like, treacherous, slanderous adversaries, who are preparing themselves for war against him, and whom he will ultimately have to fight in open battle. The Psalm, more bold than beautiful in form, is Davidic in thoughts and figures, and is to be explained by the circumstances of Absalom's rebellion, which was followed by the rebellion of Sheba the Benjamite as an outbreak of Ephraimitish jealousy. Psalms 58 and 64 are very similar. D.

2, 3. The wicked assault the righteous with

three weapons : with the heart, by conspiracy ; with the tongue, by lying ; and with the hand, by violence. *Lorinus.*

3. Sharpened their tongues like a serpent. To sharpen or whet the tongue imports the keenest and extremest kind of talkativeness, much more to sharpen the tongue "*like a serpent.*" Naturalists tell us that no living creature stirs his tongue so swiftly as a serpent, and serpents are therefore said to have a treble tongue, because, moving their tongue so fast, they seem to have three tongues. The Psalmist means, the wicked speak thick and threefold, they sting and poison me with their tongues. *Caryl.*—There are men, the very existence of whom is a baneful poison. They dart their livid tongue like the tongue of a serpent ; and the venom of their disposition corrodes every object upon which it concentrates itself ; ever vilifying and maligning. *Pliny.*

In order to constitute slander, it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false ; half-truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that a word should be distinctly uttered ; a

dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance; nay, even an emphatic silence may do the work; and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life. Very emphatically was it said by one whose whole being had smarted under such affliction, "*Adders' poison is under their lips.*" F. W. R.

6. *I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God.* Here was David's stay and hope. He was assured that Jehovah was his God, he expressed that assurance, and he expressed it before Jehovah Himself. Often the less we say to our foes and the more we say to our best Friend the better it will fare with us; if we say anything, let it be said unto the Lord. S.

7, 8. From first to last, David leaves his cause in God's hands; it is not "my sword and my bow that shall help me;" he counted them vain things to help a man; and therefore, as he had so often said in other Psalms, "The Lord was his shield and his defence," and as God had already shielded his head in the day of battle, so he prays for the same protection against his enemies now. *Bouchier.*

9. *The head of those surrounding me, the mischief of their lips shall cover them.* While my head is covered by the Divine protection, the head of those by whom I am beset shall be covered with the consequences or the punishment of the mischief occasioned by their calumnies

and insults. Or the trouble, which their lips have caused to others, shall return upon themselves. A.—The LXX., Jerome, and the majority of modern commentators give the future, "Though they that compass me may lift up the head, the mischief of their own lips *shall* cover them; hot burning coals *shall* fall upon them," etc. P.

9-11. Their lips, which uttered mischief against others, shall be the means of covering themselves with confusion, when out of their own mouths they shall be judged. Evil speakers and false accusers shall gain no lasting establishment, but punishment shall hunt sin through all its doubles and seize it at last. *G. Horne.*

11. *Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.* 'Tis an allusion to hounds that are of a quick scent, and pursue the game with pleasure; they do not see the deer or the hare, yet they follow upon the scent; and though they have sometimes a very cold and dead scent, yet they will follow and work it out. Thus "*evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him;*" and though sometimes he hath, as it were, got out of the view or sight of evil, and thinks himself under covert, yet these evils, like a company of greedy hounds, will pursue till they have overtaken and overthrown him. *Caryl.*—He hunted the good, and now his own evil shall hunt him. Sin is its own punishment; a violent man will need not direr doom than to reap what he has sown. It is horrible for a huntsman to be devoured by his own hounds; yet this is the sure fate of the persecutor. S.

PSALM CXLI.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 LORD, I have called upon thee; make haste unto me:

Give ear unto my voice, when I call unto thee.

2 Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee;

The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth;

Keep the door of my lips.

4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing,

To be occupied in deeds of wickedness

With men that work iniquity:

And let me not eat of their dainties.

5 Let the righteous smite me, *it shall be a kindness;*

And let him reprove me, *it shall be as oil upon the head;*

Let not my head refuse it:

For even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue.

6 Their judges are thrown down by the sides
of the rock ;

And they shall hear my words : for they are
sweet.

7 As when one ploweth and cleaveth the earth,
Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.

8 For mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord :

In thee do I put my trust ; leave not my
soul destitute.

9 Keep me from the snare which they have
laid for me,

And from the gins of the workers of in-
iquity.

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
Whilst that I withal escape.

THIS Psalm presents some peculiar difficulties of interpretation, which, however, are due neither to the words employed nor to the grammatical construction, but to the extreme abruptness with which in vs. 5-7 the thoughts follow one another, and the extreme obscurity which hangs over the allusions. To translate each sentence by itself is no difficult matter, but it is almost hopeless either to link the sentences plausibly together, or to discover in them any tangible clew to the circumstances in which the Psalmist was placed. As all the ancient versions must have had substantially the same text, the deviations in any of them being very slight, it is hardly probable that, as Olshausen and Hupfeld maintain, the text is corrupt ; it is more likely that our entire ignorance of the circumstances under which the Psalm was written prevents our piercing the obscurity of the writer's words.

It has been usual to accept the inscription which assigns the Psalm to David, and to assign it to the time of his persecution by Saul. Delitzsch, with more probability, refers the Psalm to the time of Absalom's rebellion. P.—David was banished from Jerusalem and, therefore, cut off from the sacrificial worship of God on Zion ; the Psalm before us is an evening hymn on one of those troublous days. The ancient Church has chosen it for its evening hymn, just as it has chosen Psalm 63 for its morning hymn. Chrysostom describes it as being known by almost every one, and as being sung all one's days. D.

This Psalm, like the one before it, is distinguished by a pregnant brevity and the use of rare expressions, while at the same time it is full of verbal and real coincidences with the Psalms of David. These indications are so clear and undeniable, that a sceptical critic of great eminence (De Wette) pronounces it one of the oldest Psalms in the collection. A.

1, 2. Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for. He loved prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be

heard and answered. His crying denotes fervency in prayer, he prayed as one in earnest ; his crying to God denotes faith and fixedness in prayer. H.

2. *Let my prayer continue (as) incense before Thee, the offering of my hands (as) the evening oblation.* *Continue*, literally, *be established*. He prays not only for acceptance, but for constant or perpetual acceptance, as the offerings referred to were the stated daily services of the Mosaic ritual. *Incense* is in Scripture the symbol of prayer. In the later books it is commonly mentioned as an evening oblation, perhaps because in the evening it was reckoned the main offering, whereas in the morning it was merely an appendage to the animal sacrifice. A.

Before Thee as incense, literally, let my prayer, incense, be set in order before Thee, implying that prayer was in the reality what incense was in the symbol. Passing to New Testament Scripture, though still only to that portion which refers to Old Testament times, we are told of the people without being engaged in prayer while Zacharias was offering incense within the sanctuary ; they were in spirit going along with the priestly service. And in the Book of Revelation the prayers of saints are once and again identified with the offering of incense on the golden altar before the throne (Rev. 5 : 8 ; 8 : 3, 4). P. Fairbairn.

There was a fitness in the nature of things in incense being regarded as an embodied prayer. Perfume is the breath of flowers, the sweetest expression of their inmost being, an exhalation of their very life. It is a sign of perfect purity, health, and vigor ; it is a symptom of full and joyous existence ; for disease, and decay, and death yield not pleasant but revolting odors. And, as such, fragrance is in nature what prayer is in the human world. Prayer is the breath of life, the expression of the soul's best, holiest, and the heavenliest aspirations ; the symptom and token of its spiritual health, and right and happy relations with God. The natural counterparts of the prayers that rise from the closet and the sanctuary are to be found in

the delicious breathings, sweetening all the air, from gardens of flowers, from clover crofts or thymy hill-sides, or dim pine woods, and which seem to be grateful, unconscious acknowledgments from the heart of nature for the timely blessings of the great world-covenant; dew to refresh and sunshine to quicken. *Macmillan.*

It is not the composure of prayer or the eloquence of expression that is the sweetness of it in God's account, and makes it *a sacrifice of a pleasing smell or sweet odor to Him*; but the breathing forth the desire of the heart that makes it a spiritual sacrifice. L.—The *lifting up of his hands in prayer* denotes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire, and the outgoings of his hope and expectation; the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul and its best affections to God; now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God, as the incense which was daily burned upon the golden altar. H.

Evening sacrifice. The sacrifice here meant is strictly the offering consisting of fine flour with oil and frankincense, or of unleavened cakes mingled with oil, which was burned upon the altar (see Lev. 2: 1–11). This, however, like the “incense,” was only added to the burnt-offering, the lamb which was offered every morning and evening. It would seem, therefore, that these two, “the incense” and “the offering of fine flour,” etc., stand for the morning and evening sacrifices; and the sense is, “Let my daily prayer be acceptable to Thee as are the daily sacrifices of Thine own appointment.” The incense may be mentioned because, as ascending in a fragrant cloud, it was symbolical of prayer; and the same would hold also of the “meat-offering,” of which it is said that the priest was to burn a part as “a memorial,” “a sweet savor under Jehovah” (Lev. 2: 9). P.

The altar of incense stood in the closest connection with the altar of burnt-offerings. The blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled on the horns of both on the great day of annual atonement. Morning and evening, as soon as the sacrifice was offered, the censer poured forth its fragrant contents, so that the perpetual incense within ascended simultaneously with the perpetual burnt-offering outside. Without the live coals from off the sacrificial altar, the sacred incense could not be kindled; and without the incense previously filling the holy place,

the blood of atonement from the altar of burnt-offering could not be sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Beautiful and expressive type of the perfect sacrifice and the all-prevailing intercession of Jesus—of intercession founded upon atonement, of atonement preceded and followed by intercession! Beautiful and expressive type, too, of the prayers of believers kindled by the altar-fire of Christ's sacrifice, and perfumed by His merits! *Macmillan.*

There is a general kind of devotion that goes through the renewed heart and life of a Christian, which we may term habitual and virtual; and there is a special and fixed exercise of devotion, which we may name actual. The soul that is rightly affected to God is never void of a holy devotion; wherever it is, whatever it does, it is still lifted up to God, and fastened upon Him, and converses with Him. *Bishop H.*

If you would have fire for your evening sacrifice, do not expect a new flame to be dropped from heaven, but keep what is already on thy altar from going out, which thou canst not better do than by feeding it with the fuel of ejaculatory prayer all the day. *Gurnall.*—Prayer at stated seasons is good and necessary; but a man aiming at sanctity in ever so low a degree will find it impossible to confine his prayers to stated seasons. He will soon discover that prayer is literally, and not merely in a figure, “the Christian's breath of life;” and that to attempt to carry on the spiritual life without more prayer than the recital of a form on rising, and retiring to rest, is about the same absurdity as it would be for a man to open his casement morning and evening, and inhale the fresh air for a few minutes, and then say to himself on closing it, that that amount of breathing must suffice him for the rest of the day. Under this view of it, ejaculatory prayer is seen to be even a more essential thing than stated prayer. Both are necessary to the well-being of Christian life; but the momentary lifting the heart to God, the momentary realization of His presence amid business or under temptation, is necessary to its very being. The life is no more when the work is suspended. *Goulburn.*

3. Set a watch. The prayer is apparently directed against the temptation to indulge in rash and foolish words, such as wicked men would indulge in (see next verse). P.—*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out, which may any way tend to the dishonor of God or the hurt of*

others. Good men know the evil of tongue sins, and how prone they are to them; when enemies are provoking, we are in danger of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men; and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing that no watchfulness or resolution of their own is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. H.

Everything is transacted by speech, in natural, civil, and religious concerns; how much, therefore, depends on the good or evil management of the tongue! What an ardor of holy love and friendship, or of anger and malice, may a few words fan into a flame! The tongue is the principal instrument in the cause of God; and it is the chief engine of the devil. The use, the influence of it, therefore, is inexpressible; and words are never to be considered only as *effects*, but as *causes*, the operation of which can never be fully imagined. We are in danger from the frequency of speech. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." We must of necessity speak often; but we often speak without necessity. Duty calls us to intermingle much with our fellow-creatures; but we are too little in the closet, and too much in the crowd, and when we are in company we forget the admonition, "Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak." W. Jay.

It is a fault to *speak* evil one of another, but the essence of the fault lies in the want of that charity which *thinketh* no evil. Had the heart been filled with this principle, no such bad thing as slander would have come out of it. T. C.—For of all the disorders of the tongue, the remedy must begin at the heart, purge the fountain, and then the streams will be clean; *keep thy heart*, and then it will be easy to keep thy tongue. It is a great help in the quality of speech to abate in the quantity; not to speak rashly, but to ponder what we are going to say. *Set a watch before the door of thy lips*. He bids us not build it up like a stone wall, that nothing go in or come out; but he speaks of a door which may be sometimes open, oft-times shut, but withal to have a watch standing before it continually. A Christian must labor to have his speech as contracted as can be in the things of this earth; and even in Divine things our words should be few and wary. In speaking of the greatest things, it is a great point of wisdom not to speak much. Leighton.

Not only must we carefully silence all expressions savoring of falsehood, irreverence or malice; not only must we be content to part

with a character for wit and ability, rather than gain it by words more entertaining than innocent; but we must learn to speak considerably and discreetly, checking all idle conversation, which is folly and tends to sin, and even in mirth remembering whose we are and whom we serve. So, too, by our words we should do good, as well as abstain from evil. To conciliate the affections, to increase the knowledge, to correct the faults, to encourage the virtues, to alleviate the sorrows, or even to amuse the cares of our fellow-creatures, are worthy employments of the faculty of speech; but still more so, to spread the knowledge of religion, to honor God and benefit men. *Bishop Jackson*.

The Master keeps the lips of His servants by so filling their hearts with His love that the outflow cannot be unloving, by so filling their thoughts that the utterance cannot be un-Christlike. There must be filling before there *can* be pouring out; and if there is filling, there *must* be pouring out, for He hath said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." F. R. Havergal.

4. "Incline not my heart to any evil thing," like the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," must not be construed as assuming any danger or even moral possibility that God may tempt men to sin. It is rather a brief way of saying, Protect me by Thy providence, guard me by Thy Spirit, from being led into any evil thing. "Let me not eat the dainties of the wicked" in its moral application covers not merely delicacies of food, tempting, poisonous; but all enticing seductions toward any sinful self-indulgence—temptation to any sin. C.—We are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we received injuries we may return them; and therefore we have need to pray that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with or in opposition to the *men that work iniquity*. While we live in such an evil world and carry about with us such evil hearts we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurements nor driven on by any provocation to do any sinful thing. H.

The way the heart inclines the life soon tends; evil things desired bring forth wicked things practised. Unless the fountain of life is kept pure the streams of life will soon be polluted. S.—There is strife for the heart. "Give it me," saith the Lord; "give it me," saith the tempter; "give it me," saith riches; "give it me," saith pleasure; as though thou must needs give it to some one. Now here is the choice, whether thou wilt give it to God or

the devil; God's heart or the devil's heart; whose wilt thou be? *Henry Smith.*

5-7. Up to this point the Psalm is comparatively easy, but now it becomes exceedingly difficult. David, well aware of his sins against God and of his imperfection as a ruler, says in opposition to the abuse which he is now suffering, that he would willingly submit to any friendly correction. Well-meaning reproof shall be acceptable and spiritually profitable to him—that is the meaning of the figure, as Paul Gerhard paraphrases it: "He who knows how to smite me in lovingkindness is as he who in days of joy pours copiously upon my head the balsam that flows by the Jordan." There now follows the reason, enigmatical both in meaning and expression. We explain it, *for the case still stands thus that my prayer is against their wickedness, i.e., to these I oppose no weapon save that of prayer, and am therefore in the spiritual mood susceptible to well-meaning reproof.* Mendelssohn renders it similarly: I still pray, while they practise infamy. He who in v. 3 has prayed God to set a watch before his mouth is now dumb over against the present possessors of authority, and seeks to keep himself clean from their sinful ongoing, whereas he willingly allows himself to be chastised by the righteous; and the more silent he is toward the world, he is all the more constant in his intercourse with God. But there will come a time when those who now bear themselves as lords will fall a prey to the vengeance of the people misled by them, and when, on the other hand, the confession of the salvation and of the way of the salvation of God, that has hitherto had to be silent, may again make itself freely heard and will find a ready hearing. As v. 6 says, the new rulers fall a prey to the fury of the people and are hurled down the steep rocks, while the people that has again come to its right mind attends to David's word and finds it pleasant and beneficent. D.

5. According to the rendering of this verse, the sense will be, "I will gladly welcome even the reproofs of the good, and I will avail myself of prayer as the best defence against the wickedness of my persecutors." The last member of the verse may be rendered, "For even in their wickedness (while it continues and while I suffer from it) shall my prayer continue." In v. 4 he had prayed that he might not be led astray by the evil he saw around him, nor allured by the blandishments and luxurious prosperity of the wicked. Now he says, on the contrary, "let me ever be ready to welcome even reproof from the righteous," which, how-

ever harsh, is salutary. The wounds of a friend are faithful. P.

Let the righteous smite me. If a righteous or a right-wise man smite and reprove, he will do it without gall, without bitterness, without publishing, divulging, or telling it to the world, without disgrace—to reform his friend, not to disgrace him—without flattery; not without God. *J. Gore.*—Very blunt people do little good to others, and get little love to themselves. The Scriptures recommend gentleness and kindness. The "oil" insinuates itself; the stone wounds and then rebounds. The great thing is to show the person that you really love him; and if you manifest this in the sight of God, He will bless your efforts. *Christian Treasury.*—Grace will teach a Christian to take those potions which are wholesome, though they be not toothsome. Faithful reproof is a token of love, and therefore may well be esteemed a kindness. Such wounding of a friend is healing, and so David might well call it "*an excellent oil.*" And he did not only say so, which is easy and ordinary, but acted accordingly. *Swinnock.*

What a test and trial of character there is in all reproof! How it searches and probes the heart, and proves what manner of spirit we are of! Meekly taken when *deserved*, it makes us humble ourselves for our faults; it fits us by our humility for grace and pardon. When undeserved, it is especially thankworthy, and exalts us to the likeness of Him who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. Taken in a rebellious spirit, it encourages us in sin; it makes us look on our reprover as the cause of our guilt. It is the meek and humble spirit which is most watchful against constant daily imperfections, which takes reproof, if ever it should meet with it, in the only true and Christian way. Watchful obedience trains us to lowliness and meekness, while careless and indifferent living is the surest mode of reaching undutifulness and rebellion of spirit. But in the one is peace, in the other turbulence and sorrow; the one is well pleasing to God, the other most offensive to Him. *G. Moberly.*

6. This verse, difficult in itself, is still more difficult, because it has no very obvious connection either with what precedes or with what follows. The allusions are so obscure that it is impossible to do more than guess at the meaning. *Their judges* must be in a general sense the "rulers" or "princes" of "the wicked;" for the pronoun must refer to them. The verse apparently describes a punishment which has been or will be inflicted upon them.

They shall hear. If the Psalm is to be referred to Absalom's rebellion, or any similar occasion, the sense will be, "When the leaders in the insurrection meet with the fate they deserve, then the subjects of the king will return to their allegiance." And the expression, "they shall hear my words that they are sweet," would be a thoroughly Oriental mode of describing the satisfaction with which they would welcome the gracious amnesty pronounced by their offended sovereign. P.—The verb is in the perfect tense, but surely it is the well-known predictive future. As often elsewhere, future events are seen with prophetic certainty as accomplished facts. This suggests a contrast in the mind of the poet between a *hereafter*, when, judgment having fallen upon the wicked rulers, the mass of the people shall return to their right mind, and receive meekly his gracious admonitions, and the *present*, in which they mock at his counsel, and will none of his reproof. *De Witt.*

7. Assuming that matters should come to the very worst, it is a glance of hope into the future; even should his bones and the bones of his followers be scattered at the mouth of

Sheol, their soul below, their bones above—it would, nevertheless, be only as when one in ploughing cleaves the earth; *i.e.*, they lie, not in order that they may continue lying, but in order that they may rise up anew, like seed sprouting up out of the upturned earth. D.

S. For. The conjunction does not refer to what immediately precedes, but either to what is said in vs. 4, 5, or perhaps rather to the whole of the former part of the Psalm, so far as it consists of petition, "Listen to my prayer, keep me from temptation, *for* unto Thee are mine eyes." P.—*In Thee do I put my trust.* I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day. *A. Lincoln.*

10. *No law can be more just than that the architects of destruction should perish by their own contrivances.* All that are bound over to God's justice are held in the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes prove the escape and enlargement of the righteous. H.

PSALM CXLII.

MASCHIL OF DAVID, WHEN HE WAS IN THE CAVE; A PRAYER.

1 I CRY with my voice unto the LORD;
With my voice unto the LORD do I make supplication.
2 I pour out my complaint before him;
I shew before him my trouble.
3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, thou knewest my path.
In the way wherein I walk have they hidden a snare for me.
4 Look on *my* right hand, and see; for there is no man that knoweth me:
Refuge hath failed me; no man careth for my soul.

5 I cried unto thee, O LORD;
I said, Thou art my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:
Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.
7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto thy name:
The righteous shall compass me about;
For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

THIS is the last of the eight Psalms which, according to their inscriptions, are to be referred to David's persecution by Saul. Like the fifty-seventh Psalm, it is supposed to describe his thoughts and feelings when he was

"in the cave," though whether in the cave of Adullam or in that of Engedi is not clear. The general strain of the Psalm is that of the earlier books. It expresses in language like that of David the cleaving of the heart to God,

the deep sense of loneliness, the cry for deliverance, the confidence that that deliverance will call forth the sympathy and the joy of many others. P.

TITLE. *When he was in the cave.* Every part of this Psalm shows the propriety of its inscription or title. He expressly mentions his being in a place where he was entirely shut up, where he saw no possible method of escaping, as having no friends that dared to own him and appear for his deliverance, and when every one seemed to desert him and to have abandoned all care of his safety and life. He seems almost to have despaired of himself, and declares that his spirit is quite overwhelmed with the greatness of his distress. At length, recollecting his principles and the promises that God had made him, he earnestly supplicates the protection of God and assures himself that he should yet praise God for his deliverance, and that good men should share his joy, and encompass the altar of God with thanksgiving for the mercy that He had shown him. *Chandler.*

2. *I pour out before Him my care; my trouble before Him I tell.* The word translated *care* means properly reflection, meditation, musing, especially such as is anxious and sad. A. —The word "*complaint*" does not express the idea. The meaning is not that he *complained* of God or of man; but that his mind *meditated* on his condition. *Barnes.*

3. This is what consoles him, that Jehovah is intimately acquainted with his way and with the dangers that threaten him at every step, and therefore also understands how to appreciate the justification and the meaning of his cry. D. —Because there seems to be no light but only darkness, that may not be any positive proof that God is not with the soul. The soul may not be able to perceive it by reason, as Bunyan expresses it, of the impediment that attends the place; and yet God may be guiding and blessing the soul, even in such thick darkness. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, said David in such a case, then *Thou* knewest my path. *Cheever.*

4. *Look to the right and see; and there is no one knowing me; refuge has failed me; there is no one caring for my soul.* The first two verbs

must be translated as imperatives. The right hand is mentioned as the post of a protector. We might say, Look to the right and see, and (you will find that) there is no one. *Knowing*, recognizing, willing to acknowledge, much less to defend. *There is none to me, i.e.,* I have none. Far from having a protector at my right hand, I have not even one who will acknowledge that he knows me. *Caring*, literally, *seeking*, asking, or inquiring after it, in order to assist or save it. A.

Observe the beautiful opposition between "*Thou knewest*" (v. 3) and "*no man would know me.*" "*Refuge failed me,*" literally, "*perished*" from me. But *Thou art my refuge.* *Fausset.*

5. What a grand confession of faith was this! David spoke to God, and of God; "*Thou art my refuge.*" Not Thou hast provided me a refuge, but Thou, Thyself, art my refuge. He fled to God alone; he hid himself beneath the wings of the Eternal. He not only believed this, but said it and practised it. Nor was this all; for David, when banished from his portion in the promised land and cut off from the portion of goods which he by right inherited, found his portion in God; yea, God *was* his portion. S.

6, 7. All fellowship of faith and love is imperfect; and there are situations in life in which man feels himself altogether isolated and turns all the more earnestly to God, who alone can satisfy the soul's need of love, who loves with a love that is absolutely unselfish and unchangeable and pure, to whom the soul can without reserve confide whatever burdens it, and who not only honestly desires its highest good, but is also able to bring it about in spite of all obstacles. Surrounded by bloodthirsty enemies, misunderstood, or at least not understood at bottom by his friends, David feels himself cut loose from every creature. Then, despairing of everything that is visible, he cries to the invisible One. He is his refuge and his portion, *i.e.,* the portion that satisfies him. To be allowed to call Him his God, this it is that satisfies him and outweighs everything else. For Jehovah is the living One, and he who has Him as his own cannot die; he cannot perish. D.

PSALM CXLIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 HEAR my prayer, O LORD ; give ear to my supplications :
 In thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.
- 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant ;
 For in thy sight no man living is righteous.
- 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul ;
 He hath smitten my life down to the ground :
 He hath made me to dwell in dark places,
 as those that have been long dead.
- 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me ;
 My heart within me is desolate.
- 5 I remember the days of old ;
 I meditate on all thy doings :
 I muse on the work of thy hands.
- 6 I spread forth my hands unto thee :
 My soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a weary land.
- [Selah]
- 7 Make haste to answer me, O LORD ; my spirit faileth :

- Hide not thy face from me ;
 Lest I become like them that go down into the pit.
- 8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning ;
 For in thee do I trust :
 Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk ;
 For I lift up my soul unto thee.
- 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies :
 I flee unto thee to hide me.
- 10 Teach me to do thy will ; for thou art my God :
 Thy spirit is good ; lead me in the land of uprightness.
- 11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake :
 In thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.
- 12 And in thy lovingkindness cut off mine enemies,
 And destroy all them that afflict my soul ;
 For I am thy servant.

THIS is the last of the seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called. In the Hebrew it is styled a Psalm of David ; in some copies of the LXX it is further said to have been written when he had to flee from his son Absalom. It is probable that the deep tone of sorrow and anguish which pervades the Psalm, and the deep sense of sin, led to the belief that it must be referred to that occasion. The spirit and the language, it is true, are not unworthy of David ; yet the many passages borrowed from earlier Psalms make it more probable that this Psalm is the work of some later poet. Delitzsch says, very truly, that if David himself did not write it—and he admits that the many expressions derived from other sources are against such a supposition—still the Psalm is “an extract of the most precious balsam from the old Davidic songs.” Like other post-exile Psalms (such, for instance, as the one hundred and sixteenth and one hundred and nineteenth), it is a witness to us of the depth and reality of the religious life in the later history of the nation, and an evidence also of the way in which that life was upheld and cherished by the inspired

words of David and other Psalmists and prophets of old. The Psalm consists of two parts, each of which is of six verses, the conclusion of the first being marked by the Selah. The first portion contains the complaint (vs. 1-6) ; the second the prayer founded on that complaint vs. 7-12). P.

1. *Jehovah, hear my prayer, give ear unto my cries for mercy ; in Thy faithfulness answer me (and) in Thy righteousness.* The combination of faithfulness and righteousness can hardly be regarded as distinct grounds of argument, but rather as modified statements of the same. The faithfulness of God has direct reference to His promise or covenant engagements ; His righteousness has reference to the claims of His own people, but claims which owe their existence to those same covenant engagements. A.—He sets forth two reasons for the answering of his prayer that are found in God Himself : The truthfulness with which He evinces the truth of His promises ; *i.e.*, His faithfulness to His promises ; and, His righteousness, not in a legal sense, but in the evangelical sense. D.—It is to God's own character that the appeal is made.

It is there first, and not in his own misery, that the sinner finds the great argument why his prayer should be answered. It is precisely the same ground which John takes: "If we confess our sins, He is *faithful and righteous* (true to His promise and true to His revealed character) to forgive us our sins." P.

2. *And enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for just before Thee is no one living.* To enter into judgment is a forensic phrase meaning to go to law, to prosecute, to sue. The verb in the last clause is not a passive meaning to be justified, but a neuter meaning to be just or innocent, to be in the right or on the right side of the controverted question. The acknowledgment in this verse has caused the Psalm to be reckoned among the penitential Psalms. A. —The noticeable point here is that David prays to be answered on the basis of God's faithfulness and righteousness, while yet he deprecates being judged on the score of strict justice, and even says that no living man can abide such an ordeal and come forth justified. This moral attitude, this unique position between God's covenanted faithfulness and integrity on the one hand, and His simple justice in the eye of law on the other, is by no means unknown to Christian experience. It is the case of one conscious of imperfections, deeply sensible of being all unable to stand before God blameless in law; yet encouraged to take hold of Divine promise because it *is* promise; of God's mercy because it *is* simple mercy; favor shown to those who have sinned and who are still conscious of moral weakness and shortcomings. C.

The godly man, in his desire to have his character vindicated before man, appeals to the just Judge, but instantly falls back with a guilty sense that before His tribunal none can stand. *Aglen.* —The outward rule applied by the human observer to external conduct, the man might bear and might feel that he could present to it a fairly adequate external righteousness; but the spiritual rule of the Divine law, reaching to motive, affection, and will, to the thoughts and intents of the heart; the eye that is as a flame of fire penetrating into these, exploring and revealing their secret recesses, he could not bear *that*; he could not bear it even with respect to those same things which might demand the favorable judgment of men, for while men can look only on the outward appearance, at visible external phenomena, God looks at the inner actuating and modifying forces which are busy within; things not seen, but which in His sight determine the character of the things that *are* seen. T. Binney.

The burden of the Psalmist's lamentation was none other than that which we hear in so many notes, high and low, through the whole scale of suffering in other cries of penitence or prayers for pardon. The soul of man finds itself in the presence of God, and feels that it is not and cannot be justified; that God cannot count it righteous because it is not so, and yet that, unless it be justified there can be no peace or blessedness for it. This was the problem of all problems. The man who trod the path of obedience found that it was the way of peace; but when his foot slipped and temptation came on him, and the enemy persecuted his soul, how was he to regain his ground? The devout worshipper might come before the Lord with sacrifices and burnt offerings, but he soon found that the righteous God had no pleasure in them; that He did not require them, only or chiefly, at the hands of His servants. The old difficulty returned in all its force: "In the sight of God could no man living be justified." How terrible, then, would it be if He were to enter into judgment! *Plumptre.*

He doth not say, "With an enemy, a rebel, a traitor, an impenitent sinner;" but "*with Thy servant*," one that is devoted to Thy fear, one that is consecrated to Thy service, one that is really and indeed "wholly Thine, as much and as fully as he can be." As if he had said, "Lord, if the holiest, purest, best of men should come and stand before Thee in judgment, or plead with Thee, they must needs be cast in their cause. 'If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,' alas! 'O Lord, who shall stand?'" T. Lye.

3. The suffering had made him look within, had shown him his own heart in its sinfulness and its misery; and this deep sense of sin and misery had led to the prayer in v. 2. Hence his deliverance from his enemy and the forgiveness of his sin are naturally connected in his mind. P.

4. Is desolate. Or rather, "is full of amazement," literally, "astonishes itself;" seeks to comprehend the mystery of its sufferings, and is ever beaten back upon itself in its perplexity; such is the full force of the reflexive conjugation here employed. P.

5, 6. He remembers the days of old in which Jehovah was manifestly with him; he meditates upon the whole redemptive work of God with all the mighty and gracious deeds in which it has hitherto unfolded itself; he muses upon the work of His hands; *i.e.*, the hitherto so wondrously moulded history of himself and his people. The contrast which presents itself to the Psalmist when he thus compares his present

with the past only opens his wounds still deeper and makes his prayer for help all the more urgent. He spreads forth his hands unto God that He may receive him and espouse his cause. Like a thirsty land his soul is toward Him. D.

5. I meditate, I muse. The mind and the heart are absorbing faculties. If we run over truth we shall carry little of it along with us. Nothing will take any adequate effect. Our growth will be slow, if indeed we grow at all. The joy, too, of spiritual life will be small ; it will have little elevation, little unworldly refinement. Every step in our experience requires a thoughtful and accounting mind toward Him ; and in such a mind we shall ever find peace and support. None can think for us, none do our duty but ourselves. If we do not drink of the waters of life they will not heal us ; if we do not absorb, as it were, the image and life of truth, they will not be in us, nor ever become the fashion and energy of our living. There is a sweetness, a power in the Divine promises not to be hastily made ours, but ours as the wisdom of years is that which we have toiled for as the price and glory of life ! *H. Hooker.*

There is one art of which every man should be master, the art of reflection. If you are not a thinking man, to what purpose are you a man at all ? To what end was man alone, of all animals, endued by the Creator with the faculty of self-consciousness ? But you are likewise born in a Christian land ; and revelation has provided for you new subjects for reflection, and new treasures of knowledge, never to be unlocked by him who remains self-ignorant. Self-knowledge is the key to this casket ; and by reflection alone can it be obtained. *Coleridge.*—Meditation is the life of the soul ; action is the soul of meditation ; honor is the reward of action. So meditate that thou mayest do ; so do that thou mayest purchase honor, for which purchase give God the glory. *Quarles.*

6. I have spread forth my hands, as the weary child stretches forth its hands to its mother, that on her bosom it may be hushed to rest. P.

I meditate. I stretch forth my hands. Meditation is prayer's handmaid to wait on it, both before and after the performance of supplication. It is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart for the duty of prayer ; and as the harrow after the sower, to cover the seed when 'tis sown. As the hopper feeds the mill with grist, so does meditation supply the heart with matter for prayer. *Gurnall.*—In the Hebrew poets the longing for God never strikes one as morbid or unnatural to the men who uttered it. It is as natural for them to

long for God as for the swallow to seek her nest. Throughout all their images no suspicion rises within us that they are exaggerating. We feel how truly they are reading themselves, their deepest selves. No false note occurs in all their aspiration. How joyous a thing it was to the Hebrews to seek their God ! How artlessly they call upon Him to entertain them in His pavilion, to cover them with His feathers, to hide them in His secret place, to hold them in the hollow of His hand, or stretch around them the everlasting arms ! *H. Drummond.*

7. God is a pitiful Spirit to failing spirits. "I will not contend (saith the Lord) forever, neither will I be always wroth ;" why ? we deserve His wrath should last and take fire forever against us ; yea, but (saith the Lord) this is the reason, "The spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made" (Isa. 57 : 16) ; I love and pity the fainting souls and spirits of men ; I will help my children ; how can I see my creatures whom I made and do love, to perish for want of my help ? David knew the Lord's nature, and that this was a speeding argument in prayer, which made him here and elsewhere so often use it. A pitiful father will not see the spirit of his children utterly fail. It is His opportunity ; He usually helps when all other helps fail, that we may the more strongly cleave to Him, and ground ourselves upon Him, as knowing how infirm we are, if He confirm us not. When man's cruse of oil is dry and fails and can drop no more, then is God's time to prepare His. Thus helped He the Israelites at the Red Sea, when all man's strength and wisdom was at a stand. He loves to be seen in the mount, in extremities. *T. Calvert.*

8. Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness. In God's favor is life, wealth, and grace, all good things and pleasure for evermore, so that if He look kindly to us we need be afraid of nothing. But how shall he be assured of His favor ? Even by *hearing* it, as he saith in the fifty-first Psalm : "Make me to hear joy and gladness." The voice which is heard is the Word of God, which, being apprehended by faith, is able to comfort our souls in whatsoever temptation. *Symson.*—*Loving-kindness* is a favorite expression, a choice theme of David's. It is used more in the Book of Psalms than in any other book in the Scriptures. *Loving-kindness* is love showing kindness ; it is the sun of love shining with rays of kindness ; the river of love sending forth streams of kindness ; it is the heart of love uttering itself by words of kindness, doing deeds, and giving gifts of kindness. *W. Abbott.*

In Thee do I trust. Our plea with the Lord is our faith ; if we are relying upon Him He cannot disappoint us ; " In thee do I trust " is a sound and solid argument with God. He who made the ear will cause us to hear ; He who is love itself will have the kindness to bring His loving-kindness before our minds. S.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. This may be said to comprise every other prayer. If God gives His servant to " know the way wherein he should walk," and strength to walk in it, peace, and order, and liberty, and joy will soon come. Life is a daily difficulty. Think of the number of things that are to be believed, that are to be renounced, that are to be examined, that are to be distinguished in themselves and from other things, that are to be tentatively dealt with, that are to be done, that are to be left undone, that are to be waited for, that are to be suffered. All these are included in the " way wherein we should walk." First, as respects *opinions and beliefs*. There can be no living way for a man that does not involve these. We are bound to form them, and the point is that there is very great difficulty in forming some of them or in keeping them when we have them. Any one of us, if we will, may be of them that believe to the saving of the soul. How ? By bringing the whole case fully and earnestly before God. If we come really to Him, we have solved the difficulty, we have come into the new and living way, and God will make that way more and more plain before our face ; whereas if we abide among the exterior things, examining, considering, comparing, putting this opinion against that, and working the whole matter simply as a high intellectual problem, without ever making the last and highest appeal, we have no certainty of a good and true issue. Secondly, in respect of *conduct* also, we find life to be a scene of constant difficulty. Even those who know the way they should go, so far as it consists of beliefs, convictions, principles, find it still in their practise to be a way of continual difficulty. What can we do ? We can pray. We can use this text and get the benefits it carries. The solution of all difficulty, be it what it may, is " to lift up the soul to God." God is the God of peace ; and to lift up the soul to Him is to rise out of storm into calm, is to leave the self-made troubles of life beneath us while we mount up on eagles' wings into His eternal and illimitable tranquillity. *Raleigh.*

Cause me to know, for I lift up my soul unto Thee. Religious life is more than feeling, more than knowledge, more than

obedience to a moral code ; and yet religion is feeling, it is mental illumination, it is especially moral effort ; because it is that which implies, comprehends, and combines them all. It is the sacred bond, freely accepted, generously, enthusiastically, persistently welcomed, whereby the soul binds itself to God, its true Friend. To be thus bound to a person is to cherish strong feelings toward him ; it is to seek to know all that can be known about his wishes and character, and to register this knowledge in exact terms ; it is to obey scrupulously all that is clearly ascertained to be his will. " Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift my soul unto Thee ! " This is the language of feeling, pure and strong ; it is the language of intelligence, ever desiring a higher knowledge of its Highest Object ; it is the language of obedience, the most absolute that man can proffer. It is these, because it is the voice, the exceeding great cry of that unquenchable passion, of that irrepressible aspiration whereby the soul of man shows forth its truest dignity and highest virtue in seeking the better to know and love and serve its Highest and Invisible Object ; because, in a word, it is the language of religion. *Liddon.*

The heavenward look will guard us from the temptations which surround all our service and the distractions which lay waste our lives. It is habitual communion with Christ alone that will give the persistency that makes systematic, continuous efforts for Him possible, and yet will keep systematic work from degenerating, as it ever tends to do, into mechanical work. We are ever apt to trust to our work, to do it without a distinct recurrence at each moment to the principles on which it rests, and the motives by which it should be actuated ; to become so absorbed in details that we forget the purpose which alone gives them meaning, to overestimate the external aspects of it, to lose sight of the solemn truths which make it so grand, and to think of it as commonplace because it is common, as ordinary because it is familiar. And from these most real dangers, which beset us all there is no refuge but the frequent, the habitual gaze into the open heavens, which will show us again the realities of things, and bring to our spirits, dwarfed even by habits of goodness, the freshening of former motives by the vision of Jesus Christ. For ourselves, and for all that we do for Him, living communion with God is the means of power and peace, of security and success. A. M.

8-12. The series of petitions may thus be grouped : Prayer for God's mercy or loving-kindness, as that on which all hangs, and then

for guidance (v. 8). For deliverance from enemies, and then still more fully for a knowledge of God's will and the gifts of His Spirit, that he may obey that will (vs. 9, 10). For a new life, and deliverance from suffering, and now not only for deliverance from his enemies, but for their destruction (vs. 11, 12). P.

10. Jehovah alone, unto whom he has fled for refuge, can make him know in the externally and internally perilous position in which he finds himself what is right and salutary; He alone can teach him how to carry out the recognized will of God. This is what he begs of Him in v. 10; for Jehovah is indeed his God, who cannot leave him in error; may His good Spirit, then, *i.e.*, His Spirit which willingly furthers the salvation of man, lead him. D.

To do Thy will. Not merely to *know* it; hence the need of the Holy Spirit's aid, His quickening, guiding, strengthening, as well as His enlightening influence. P.—We are to pray that God would teach us to know and then teach us to do His will. Knowledge without obedience is lame, obedience without knowledge is blind; and we must never hope for acceptance if we offer the blind and the lame to God. *Vincent Alsop.*

Thy Spirit is good. It is vain to imagine that our obedience is to have no other rule but the Spirit without an attendance to the law; the Spirit is, indeed, the efficient cause of our obedience, and hence we are said to be "led by the Spirit;" but it is not properly the rule of our obedience, but the will of God revealed in His Word is the rule; the Spirit is the wind that drives us in our obedience; the law is our compass, according to which it steers our course for us. The Spirit and the law, the wind and the compass, can stand well together. "*Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God*" (there is David's rule, viz., God's will revealed); "*Thy Spirit is good*" (there is David's wind, that enabled him to steer his course according to it). The Spirit of life doth free us from the law of sin and death, but not from the holy, and pure, and good, and righteous law of God (Rom. 8 : 1-3). *T. Shepherd.*—We are inclined and enabled to good by the sanctifying Spirit. In the Christian religion, not only the precepts are good, but there goeth along with them the power of God to make us good. The Spirit's direction hath strength joined with it. And He is a good Spirit as He doth incline us to good. The Spirit is the only fountain of all goodness and holiness (Neh. 9 : 20): "Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them." Why is He so often called the good Spirit but that all His

operations tend to make men good and holy? Eph. 5 : 9, "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." *Manton.*

Perhaps we have not sufficiently considered the lovingness of the character of the Third Person in the Holy Trinity. To the minds of many who still recognize His complete personality He is as One almost passionless. To some He is associated with the thoughts of reproof and sternness. The chief and highest name of the Holy Spirit is "Comforter," and not a comforter, as though He were one among many, but exclusively, so that whatever comfort there is in all the world dates itself in Him, "the Comforter." His very title, twice repeated, is "Spirit of love," and His first-fruit and all His fruits—for each fruit in order is only the expression of the first; it is only the same grace placed in a different combination—"love." The Holy Ghost is a great Leader. He guides into all truth; truth of thought first, truth of feeling next, truth of action afterward. His leadings tend to the land of uprightness. And where is that? Truth's land must be Christ's land, because Christ is truth; and therefore the Gospel must be "the land of uprightness." *J. Vaughan.*

Land of uprightness. Literally, "in a level land," or "on level ground," where there is no fear of stumbling and falling. The word *mîshôr* is constantly used of the plain (champaign) country. P.—The land of plainness, a land where no wickedness of men, and malice of Satan, vex the soul from day to day; a land where no rough paths and crooked turns lengthen out the traveller's weary journey (see v. 5); but where all is like the smooth pastures of Reuben, a fit place for flocks to lie down. *A. Bonar.*

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. These two clauses mean substantially the same thing. The Psalmist's longings are expressed in the first of them in plain words, and in the second in a figure. "To do God's will" is to be in "the land of uprightness." In each case his prayer is based upon a motive or plea. "Thou art my God." His faith apprehends a personal bond between him and God, and feels that that bond obliges God to teach him His will. "Thy Spirit is good," and therefore the trusting spirit has a right to ask to be made good likewise. The relation of the believing spirit to God not only obliges God to teach it His will, but to make it partaker of His

own image and conformed to His own purity. Or the last clause may be read, "Let Thy good Spirit lead me." In either case the goodness of the Divine Spirit is the plea upon which the prayer is grounded. And the thought just comes to this: We have the right to expect that we shall be made participant of the Divine nature. So sweet, so deep, so tender is the tie that knits a devout soul to God, that nothing short of conformity to the perfect purity of God can satisfy the aspirations of the creature or discharge the obligations of the Creator. It is a daring thought. The Psalmist's desire was a prophecy. The New Testament vindicates and fulfils it when it says, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Christ's heart cannot be satisfied, Christ's cross cannot be rewarded, the Divine nature cannot be at rest, the purpose of redemption cannot be accomplished until all that have trusted in Christ are partakers of Divine purity, and all the wanderers are led by devious and yet by right paths, by crooked and yet by straight ways, by places rough and yet smooth into the land of uprightness. Where and what He is, there and that shall also His servants be. A. M.

11. *Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy name's sake.* For the sake of Thine own glory, that Thou mayest show Thyself to be the God of loving-kindness and power, which thou art esteemed to be. *Fausset.*—*For Thy righteousness' sake.* It is worthy of observation that the Psalmist pleads God's righteousness as the foundation on which he bases his supplication for the deliverance of his soul from trouble, and God's loving-kindness or mercy as that on which he grounds his prayer, or his conviction, that God will destroy his enemies. This is not the language of a revengeful and bloodthirsty spirit. *Bib. Com.*

11, 12. *Thy name's sake . . . Thy righteousness' sake . . . And of Thy mercy.* Mark here with what three cords David seeks to draw God to grant him his suits; for His name's sake, for His righteousness' sake, and for His mercy's sake, three such motives that it must be a very hard suit that God will deny if either of them be used. *R. Baker.*—Mercies asked with an act of faith and assurance shall be obtained; God, for the sake of His name and His righteousness, of His glory and His faithfulness in the performance of His promises, will not fail to be favorable and gracious to his servants, quickening them and bringing them by degrees out of all their troubles. *Bishop Horne.*

12. We have nothing to do with the historical sense of these and other like passages; it is not and cannot be in their historical and human meaning that the Psalms are the perpetual storehouse of prayer and thanksgiving for the people of God in every age. But the spiritual meaning of these words expresses an eternal truth which we should do ill not to remember. We have enemies, we have those that vex our soul; the Psalmist spoke a language which every one of God's servants may echo. Did Paul mean anything or nothing when he said our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the princes of this world's darkness, against evil spirits not confined in the great deep, but ranging at will in this upper world? Did Peter mean anything or nothing when he said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"? By these words we see that if we are indolent or slumbering, we have an enemy who is wakeful; that as we hope for the help of God's Spirit, so we have against us the power of the spirit of evil; that with a working mysterious indeed, and incomprehensible, as is the working of God's Spirit no less, yet with a fruit clearly manifest, there is an influence busy in undoing every work of grace in our souls, in driving away every thought of penitence or of love, in instigating every evil desire, in deepening every fit of spiritual slumber. Indeed it is no unmeaning prayer. "Destroy them that afflict my soul." *T. Arnold.*

Thy servant. Does God give His servants wages for what they do? Yes, always. Salvation is not wages; heaven is not wages. Where, then, are the wages of good works? Very often providences, sometimes happy ones, sometimes bitter ones, but both wages; conscience, a good conscience; growth, more grace, more light, more peace, more faith, and more of the presence of Christ; and in heaven the degrees, higher measures, and capacities of glory awarded according to the service done. *J. Vaughan.*

The Psalms bring before us in all its fulness and richness the devotional element of the religious character. They are the first great teachers and patterns of prayer. And they show this side of the religious character in varied and finished detail, in all its compass and living and spontaneous force. *R. W. Church.*

PSALM CXLIV

A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 BLESSED be the LORD my rock,
Which teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight :</p> <p>2 My lovingkindness, and my fortress,
My high tower, and my deliverer ;
My shield, and he in whom I trust ;
Who subdueth my people under me</p> <p>3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him ?
Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him ?</p> <p>4 Man is like to vanity :
His days are as a shadow that passeth away.</p> <p>5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down :
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.</p> <p>6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them ;
Send out thine arrows, and discomfit them.</p> <p>7 Stretch forth thine hand from above ;
Rescue me, and deliver me out of great waters,
Out of the hand of strangers ;</p> <p>8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.</p> | <p>9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God :
Upon a psaltery of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.</p> <p>10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings :
Who rescueth David his servant from the hurtful sword.</p> <p>11 Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hand of strangers,
Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.</p> <p>12 When our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth ;
And our daughters as corner stones hewn after the fashion of a palace ;</p> <p>13 <i>When</i> our garners are full, affording all manner of store ;
And our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields ;</p> <p>14 <i>When</i> our oxen are well laden ;
<i>When there is</i> no breaking in, and no going forth,
And no outcry in our streets ;</p> <p>15 Happy is the people, that is in such a case :
<i>Yea</i>, happy is the people, whose God is the LORD.</p> |
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THIS is a singularly composite Psalm. The earlier portion of it, to the end of v. 11, consists almost entirely of quotations strung together from earlier Psalms ; and it is not always easy to trace a real connection between them. The latter portion of the Psalm (vs. 12-15) differs completely from the former. It bears the stamp of originality, and is entirely free from the quotations and allusions with which the preceding verses abound. It is hardly probable, however, that this concluding portion is the work of the poet who compiled the rest of the Psalm ; it is more probable that he has here transcribed a fragment of some ancient poem, in which were portrayed the happiness and prosperity of the nation in its brightest days—under David, it may have been, or at the beginning of the reign of Solomon. His object seems to have been thus to revive the hopes of his nation, perhaps after the return

from the exile, by reminding them how in their past history obedience to God had brought with it its full recompense. The Psalmist recounts glorious victories in the past, complains that the nation is now beset by strange, *i.e.*, barbarous enemies, so false and treacherous that no covenant can be kept with them, prays for deliverance from them by an interposition great and glorious as had been vouchsafed of old, and anticipates the return of a golden age of peace and plenty. P.

1, 2. The whole of this first group is an imitation of David's great song of thanksgiving for victory (Psalm 18). D.—David acknowledges his dependence upon God and his obligations to Him. A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with ■ thanksgiving for former mercy ; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless Him. H.

3. This and the next verse are again borrowed from other passages. V. 3 is a variation of Psalm 8:4. V. 4 resembles Psalm 39:5, 6. P.

3, 4. Our days are not only few, but we ourselves are *vanity*. The words are weighty and full. It is not a problem or a doubtful thing; but a definition, and so it is here proven. *What is man? He is like to vanity, and his days are as a shadow that passes away.* His days do not only soon decline and pass away as a shadow, but also they are *like vanity*. While he appears to be something, he is nothing but the figure and picture of vanity. *Every man*, and that *at his best estate* as the word is, in his settled and fixed state; set him as sure and high as you will, yet he is not above that; he carries it about with him as he does his nature. *Leighton.*

5. Here begins the direct prayer for the overthrow of his enemies. The Psalmist longs for a theophany, a coming of God to judgment, which he describes in language again borrowed from Psalm 18:9, 14-16. P.

7. That Jehovah stretches out His hand from high heaven and rescues David out of great waters, is taken verbatim from Psalm 18:17; here the poet appends to the figure its interpretation. D.

8. *Their right hand is falsehood.* The right hand, as elsewhere, is power in its greatest activity. In the Hebrew there is an emphatic repetition, "their right hand is a right hand of falsehood." Every activity is possessed, directed, and controlled by falsehood as the spirit that inspires it, the opposite of the description in Psalm 15:2, "the thought of whose heart is the truth." This occurs again in v. 11. *De Witt.*

12. *That our sons may be as grown-up plants even in youth.* The fathers and the mothers want the sons in their homes. They are the beautiful staffs on which their parents would lean when sorrow comes, when old age comes. There is nothing more attractive or holy out of heaven than the reverence of a true son for his father—is not God our Father?—than the love of a pure boy for his mother. The boy to whom his father is a kind of elder brother—how holy is the epithet, since Jesus has hallowed it, by becoming ours; the boy to whom his mother is the ideal of all excellence. The Psalmist sees a period in the national history of his people when young men shall have a youth in their own homes, under the eyes of their father and near the heart of their mother. It is home training, home memories, home inspirations that are the hope of our youth. They are the qualities that go into their manhood.

That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. Sons are out-door plants; daughters are in-door adornments. Sons grow up in out-door strength; daughters clothe a home with attractiveness and grace. The Psalmist passes from the growth of the out-door plant to the corner-carvings with which it was customary to decorate the inside of palaces. There is a beauty of inward character, a beauty of outward life which originates in that character, which even God desires. "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty," which, in God's sight, is of great price. And I think that when the sacred writer in the text speaks of the daughters in our homes, he means this beauty. There are elements of material prosperity in this Psalm which are very beautiful. Peace brings rest to material things: to the valleys which are clothed with verdure or grain; to the hills which are covered over with flocks; fills the garners to overflowing; makes traffic in towns and commerce on the seas; puts an end to all disturbances. But the most beautiful and touching element in it is this allusion to home-life, in which young men and maidens have an opportunity to develop in all the symmetry and beauty characteristic of each in its best estate. "That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; and that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace;" as though the sons graced the exterior of a home, as the plant does, and the daughters the interior. *J. E. Rankin.*

"*The polished corners of the temple,*" rather "*the sculptured angles, the ornament, of a palace.*" Great care and much ornament were bestowed by the ancients upon the angles of their splendid palaces. It is remarkable that the Greeks made use of pilasters, called Caryatides (carved after the figure of a woman dressed in long robes), to support the entablatures of their buildings. *Cresswell.*—When we see our daughters well established, and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building; when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and "become women professing godliness;" when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them. H.

Among the Hebrews the instruction of children in the history of the nation and in the precepts and principles of the law, was early, solemnly, and repeatedly prescribed. The whole

community guarded each child ; and the independent will of the father was not supreme, under the restraining Hebraic legislation. The prosperity of the city was then only conceived as perfect, when, with old men and old women dwelling in it, it should also "be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." The hope and prayer of the devout was, that "their sons might be as plants grown up in their youth, and their daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." It was only natural, under such a religion, that children should be accounted the heritage of the Lord ; that for them, at different stages of their growth, the language should furnish many general names of a tender significance ; that they should be presented with thank-offerings in the temple ; that some of the most touching and memorable passages in Hebrew literature should be those recounting the grief of parents when the infant of days had died ; and that the sweetest and grandest thought, one may almost say, which prophecy itself ever delivered, was that which came from the sublimest of Hebrew seers, that the fierce and warring elements on earth shall be subdued in the reign of the Messiah, that the wolf and the lamb shall dwell together, and the leopard with the kid, and that "a little child shall lead them all." That word is like the point of light in the eye of a portrait, illuminating the scheme of the prophetic economy. R. S. S.

The public state of religion in the world must entirely depend on the care bestowed on the cultivation of it in private families. Such as the families are of which congregations, churches, and kingdoms are composed, such will be the flourishing or the decayed state of religion in these larger communities. And consequently it is as clear as noon-day, that the disregard shown to God in our households is the fatal source of corruption of manners. Would you, then, put a stop to abounding iniquity and promote the cause of God and religion, begin at home, and let your Maker have that honor in your families to which He is entitled. R. Walker.

13, 14. This Psalm is the language of a prince who wished his people's prosperity ; that their "garners might be full of all manner of stores ;" that their "sheep might bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets ;" that their "oxen" might be fat for slaughter or "strong for labor ;" that there might be neither robbery nor beggary in their streets ; no oppressive magistrates nor complaining people ; and as if all these blessings were to be derived from

the character of the people, and the character of the people from the education they had received, our text is a prayer for the youth of Judea. R. Robinson.

14. *No sallying forth ;* literally, "going out," which has been interpreted either of "going forth to war," or "going forth into captivity." This and the previous expression, taken together, most naturally denote a time of profound peace, when no enemy lies before the walls, when there is no need to fear the assault through the breach, no need to sally forth to attack the besiegers. The whole passage (vs. 12-15) is a picture of the most perfect, undisturbed peace and tranquillity. P.—An uninterrupted peace. That there be no war ; *no breaking in* of invaders, *no going out* of deserters. Let not our enemies break in upon us ; let us not have occasion to march out against them. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. That there be no oppression or faction, *no outcry in our streets.* H.

15. *Happy is that people.* It is only a narrow and one-sided religion that can see anything out of place in this beatitude of plenty and peace. If we could rejoice with the Psalms fully and without misgiving in the temporal blessings bestowed by heaven, we should the more readily and sincerely enter into the depths of their spiritual experience. And the secret of this lies in the full comprehension and contemplation of the beautiful and pleasant as the gift of God. *Aglen.*—**Whose God is the Lord.** This comes in as an explanation of their prosperity. Those who worship the happy God become a happy people. Happy was the nation in its families, in its prosperity, and in the possession of peace ; but yet more in enjoying true religion and worshipping Jehovah, the only living and true God. S.

The last verse of this Psalm leads us to reflect wherein the peculiar happiness doth now principally consist, of "that people, whose God is the Lord." Their happiness consists in something far above riches and outward greatness ; it consists in having the Lord Himself, the Supreme Governor of the world, to take care of them, and to provide all things needful for them. They have His wisdom to instruct them ; His power to protect them ; His mercy to pardon them ; His grace to adorn them here, and His glory to crown them forever ; and all because they have the Lord Himself for their God, not only for their light, their life, their hope, their help, their strength, their tower, their sun, their shield, and their exceeding

great reward, but for their God ; which is infinitely more than can be couched under any other expression whatsoever. What can those persons lack who are thus related to, and interested in, Him that is all things in Himself ?
Bishop Beveridge.

With this prayer of Jehovah's anointed One end the prayers of the Book of Psalms. The remaining six Psalms consist exclusively of praise and high hallelujahs. *Lord Congleton.*

Look at a whole city, in the full tide of commercial prosperity and social indulgence. Abundance shall run down all the streets like rivers of water. Every scene of entertainment, from the glittering play-house to the lowest haunt of dissipation, shall be nightly thronged and illuminated. The men shall build palaces as playthings, and the women string diamonds as beads. The talk of the town shall be of the last night's brilliancy and jewelry, raiment and banquet. Night itself shall be turned into day, not for vigils of prayer or praises of the Great Benefactor—if *that* were done the whole population would laugh aloud at the fanaticism—but it shall be done night after night for frivolity, for dancing and eating and drinking, for this world's god, and no lip shall sneer at it. There shall be wealth enough for all this ; and every new form of ostentation, and every new avenue of traffic, and every addition to the trappings of a material estate that wealth could provide, shall heighten the pomp. Now, would this be the strong city ? What are the attributes of strength ? Self-command, courage,

faith, endurance, moderation ; these are the signs of *human* strength. Has it these ? God alone, the Almighty, is the source of strength ; and that city alone is strong of which it can be said that "God is in the midst of her." Can it be said of that city ? Character is strength, and there is no character there. It is weakness at the foundation, weakness in the superstructure, weakness at the gates ; weakness in the chambers ; weakness at the heart. You have read history ; and you know whether Tyre and Babylon and Rome just before they fell were strong.

Turn from that spectacle to another. By some providence the city is humbled. Its face is sober and thoughtful. Manners are simple ; dress is plain ; industry is more plentiful than entertainrnt ; luxuries are not seen, but charities are abundant ; its sanctuaries are thronged ; its nights are still ; its people are walking with God ; its children's indulgence is restrained. Wisdom is the ornament of grace about its neck. There are household prayers in all the houses. Righteousness is its law ; and God is its king. Here is strength : "Clean hands and a pure heart." Strong as well as happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Man is not strongest when his head is full of dreams and calculations of gain, his heart full of promotion and admiration, his hand full of this world's gifts, and his mouth full of meat and wine. He is strong when he rules his spirit ; strong when he works, and consecrates his work to God ; strong when he is on his knees ; strong when he forgets himself, and lives in the spirit of the apostle's declaration : "It is no more I that live, but Christ liveth in me." F. D. H.

PSALM CXLV.

A PSALM OF PRAISE ; OF DAVID.

- 1 I WILL extol thee, my God, O King ;
And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day will I bless thee ;
And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised ;
And his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 One generation shall laud thy works to another,

- And shall declare thy mighty acts.
- 5 Of the glorious majesty of thine honour,
And of thy wondrous works, will I meditate.
- 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy
terrible acts ;
And I will declare thy greatness.
- 7 They shall utter the memory of thy great
goodness,
And shall sing of thy righteousness.

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| <p>8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion ;
 Slow to anger, and of great mercy.</p> <p>9 The LORD is good to all ;
 And his tender mercies are over all his works.</p> <p>10 All thy works shall give thanks unto thee,
 O LORD ;
 And thy saints shall bless thee.</p> <p>11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
 And talk of thy power ;</p> <p>12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,
 And the glory of the majesty of his kingdom.</p> <p>13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 And thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.</p> <p>14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall,
 And raiseth up all those that be bowed down.</p> | <p>15 The eyes of all wait upon thee ;
 And thou givest them their meat in due season.</p> <p>16 Thou openest thine hand,
 And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.</p> <p>17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways,
 And gracious in all his works.</p> <p>18 The LORD is high unto all them that call upon him,
 To all that call upon him in truth.</p> <p>19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him ;
 He also will hear their cry, and will save them.</p> <p>20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him ;
 But all the wicked will he destroy.</p> <p>21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD ;
 And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.</p> |
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THIS has been happily characterized as the "new song" promised in Psalm 144:9. In other words, it is the *Song of Praise*, corresponding to the didactic, penitential, and supplicatory Psalms of this series. In form it is an alphabetical Psalm, and like others of that class admits of no analysis, being made up of variations on a single theme, the righteousness and goodness of the Lord to men in general, to His own people in particular, and more especially to those who suffer. The letter *nun* is wanting, being omitted, as some suppose, for the sake of having three equal stanzas, each containing seven verses. A.—This is the last of the alphabetical Psalms, of which there are eight in all, if we reckon the ninth and tenth Psalms as forming one. Like four other of the alphabetical Psalms this bears the name of David, although there can in this case be no doubt that the inscription is not to be trusted. This is the only Psalm which is called a *Tehilla*, i.e., "praise" or "hymn," the plural of which word, *Tehillim*, is the general name for the whole Psalter. P.

Very appropriately this is called a "praise-Psalm." It groups together in lofty strains, from a full heart, the noblest utterances of praise ; the richest testimonies to the universal benevolence of the Great Father. C.—Psalms are the praises of God accompanied with song ; Psalms are songs containing the praise of God. If there be praise, but not of God, it is not a Psalm. If there be praise, and praise of God,

if it is not sung, it is not a Psalm. To make a Psalm there go these three—praise, God's praise, and song. *Augustine*.—In the original no other Psalm beareth such a title. It is appropriate to it, because this Psalm consists wholly of praise. *T. Goodwin*.—The eighty-sixth Psalm is David's *Tephilla*, his own prayer. This Psalm is his *Tehilla*, his own praise, or thanksgiving. *L. Andrews*.

It was the Psalm of the mid-day meal in the ancient Church. It is the first of the series of doxological Psalms with which the Psalter closes. It falls naturally into three sevens, which may be parted into three couplets, followed by a single verse. The first seven speak of His general greatness and goodness ; the second, of His grace and kingdom ; and the third, of His readiness to hear and answer the prayers of His people. M.

2. Forever and ever will the poet extol God and bless His name ; because the praising of God is his deepest need, in this devotion to the ever-living King he forgets his own mortality—this impulse of the soul, an impulse begotten by God Himself, toward the praising of the God to whom the soul owes its origin, in which praise it finds its noblest enjoyment, is indeed a practical proof of a life after death. D.

Praise. *Praise* is thankful, lowly, loving worship of the goodness and majesty of God. And therefore we often find the word "praise" joined with "blessing" and "thanksgiving," but though all three are akin to each other,

they are not all alike. They are steps in a gradual scale—a song of degrees. Thanksgiving runs up into blessing, and blessing ascends into praise; for praise comprehends both, and is the highest and most perfect work of all living spirits. *Manning.*

Every day will I bless Thee. Praising God must be our daily work. No day must pass, though ever so busy a day, though ever so sorrowful a day, without praising God; we ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily employments, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason that we should be every day blessing Him, speaking well of Him. H.

4. “One generation shall laud Thy works to another,” fathers to their sons; the aged and those of mature years to the young, bearing their testimony to the great deeds of Jehovah, so that this knowledge of what God has done may pass down traditionally through all human generations. This is fully in harmony with the Divine order, with the duties enjoined upon parents in the Mosaic law, and with the spirit of their commemorative institutions. C.

All the best things and treasures of this world are not to be produced by each generation for itself; but we are all intended not to carve our work in snow that will melt, but each and all of us to be continually rolling a great, white, gathering snowball higher and higher, larger and larger, along the Alps of human power. Thus the science of nations is to be accumulative from father to son; each learning a little more and a little more; each receiving all that was known, and adding its own gain. The history and poetry of nations are to be accumulative—each generation treasuring the history and songs of its ancestors, adding its own history and its own songs. And the art of nations is to be accumulative—just as science and history are; the work of living men not superseding, but building itself upon the work of the past; all growing together into one mighty temple; the rough stones and the smooth all finding their place, and rising, day by day, in richer and higher pinnacles to heaven. *Ruskin.*

5. His language labors to express his meaning; he multiplies the terms by which he would extol Jehovah, his King. Everything which has to do with the Great King is majestic, honorable, glorious. There is nothing about the infinite Lord which is unworthy of His royalty; and, on the other hand, nothing is wanting to the splendor of His reign; His majesty is hon-

orable, and His honor is glorious; He is altogether wonderful. S.

In v. 5, I will *muse* is the primary and more usual sense of the Hebrew word. It suggests that these glorious qualities of God's character and deeds should be not merely talked about and extolled in song, but be deeply pondered, laid close upon our very heart, that so their legitimate impression may be wrought into our very soul, and may mould our whole spirit and character into God's own moral image. C.

6. We must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world; various instruments are used, but in all events God is the Supreme Director; it is He that performs all things. Much of His power is seen in the operations of His providence; they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature; and much of His justice; they are terrible acts, awful to saints, dreadful to sinners. These we should take all occasions to speak of, observing the finger of God, His hand, His arm, in all, that we may marvel. H.

7. The memory of the abundant goodness of God is the theme of universal, overflowing acknowledgment, and the righteousness of God the theme of universal exultation. Having sung the glorious self-attestation of God as regarded from both its sides, the poet now lingers over the bright side, the front side, of the name Jehovah as unfolded in Ex. 34: 6. D.

They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted; nay, they can never be lessened, for He ever will be as rich in mercy as He ever was. It is memorable goodness, it is what we ought always to have in mind and preserve the memorials of; for it is *worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance*; and the memory we have of God's goodness we should *utter*, we should *abundantly utter*, as those who are very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget at the same time to *sing of His righteousness*; for as He is gracious in rewarding those that serve Him faithfully, so He is righteous in punishing those that rebel against Him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God as inexhaustible goodness; and we must sing of both together (Rom. 11: 22). H.

They shall sing of Thy righteousness. The righteousness of God, whereby He justifieth sinners and sanctifieth the justified, and executeth judgment for His reconciled people is the sweetest object of the Church's joy *Dick-*

son.—It is easy to perceive God's righteousness declared in the punishment of sins; the cross alone declares "His righteousness for the remission of sins." It magnifies justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it. *M'Laurin.*

8. Full of compassion. To the suffering, the weak, the foolish, the despondent, He is very pitiful; He feels for them, He feels with them; He compassionates freely, constantly, deeply, divinely, and effectually. In God is fulness in a sense not known among men, and this fulness is all fragrant with sympathy for human misery. **Slow to anger.** Even those who refuse His grace yet share in longsuffering. Greatly patient and extremely anxious that the sinner may live, He "lets the lifted thunder drop," and still forbears. **And of great mercy.** This is His attitude toward the guilty. When men at last repent, they find pardon awaiting them. Great is their sin and great is God's mercy. They need great help, and they have it though they deserve it not, for He is greatly good to the greatly guilty. **8.**—Mercy hath misery for its object, and is that attribute toward which the eyes of a fallen world must necessarily be turned. She is above the heavens and over all the earth, so that the whole creation findeth that refuge under the shadow of her wings of which, by reason of man's transgression, it standeth in need. *Burder.*

9. His goodness embraces all; His compassion is over all His works, it hovers over and encompasses all His creatures. Therefore all His works also praise Him; they are all together eloquent witnesses of that sympathetic love of His, which excludes no one that does not exclude himself. **D.**

10. "All Thy works shall praise Thee" is a poetic conception, yet exquisitely beautiful and just. All nature, all the beneficent arrangements by which God clothes the earth with beauty and makes it minister to the sustenance and joy of all sentient beings—all have a voice to witness for God and proclaim His praise. How much more should Thy saints to whom Thou hast given intelligence to see and appreciate Thy love pour forth their praises in honor of Thy name! **C.**—"All" God's "*works*" do "*praise*" Him, as the beautiful building praiseth the builder, or the well-drawn picture praiseth the painter; but His "*saints bless*" Him, as the children of prudent and tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, His saints, the workmanship of His grace, the first-fruits of His creatures have most reason to bless Him. **H.**

It is a poor philosophy and a narrow religion which does not recognize God as all in all. Every moment of our lives we breathe, stand, or move in the temple of the Most High; for the whole universe is that temple. Wherever we go, the testimony to His power, the impress of His hand are there. The bright worlds around us, as they roll in the everlasting harmony of their circles, tell of Him whose power launched them on their courses; the mountains that lift their heads among and above the clouds proclaim their testimony to the agency which has laid their deep foundations. The boundless waves of oceans chant from shore to shore a hymn of ascription to that Being who hath said, "Hitherto shall ye come and no further." The rivers, as they roll onward to the sea, bear along their ceaseless tribute to the ever-working energy, which struck open their fountains and poured them down through the valleys. The countless tribes of plants and animals testify to the action of the great Source of life. From every portion, from every department of nature, comes the same voice; everywhere we hear Thy name, O God! everywhere we see Thy love! Creation, in all its length and breadth, in all its depth and height, is the manifestation of Thy Spirit, and without Thee the world were dark and dead. The universe is to us as the burning bush which the Hebrew leader saw; God is ever present in it, for it burns with His glory, and the ground on which we stand is always holy. *Dillon.*

11. This kingdom is indeed a kingdom of grace. The throne is a throne of grace, and the sceptre is a sceptre of grace. He revealeth His grace, which is His glory; and thus He captivates the hearts of His people. The subjects of this kingdom have in them a preparation for perfect blessedness. They have that which meetens them "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." They are not entirely cured, it is true, of all the infection of sin, but they are under a restorative process; they are taking the medicine which is of sovereign efficacy. All the love and joy that glow with celestial fervor before the throne of the heavenly majesty is only the consummation of seeds like those which are sown in the hearts of believers, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." They are sown in their hearts; and when that which is sown, or is to be sown, shall be matured, Jesus Christ will present unto Himself "a glorious Church." And what a spectacle will this be! how will the saints themselves be astonished at their attainments! **It**

will require an eternity to know ourselves, much more to know the Fountain whence all these beauties and glories have been derived. Then, indeed, shall we "speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power." *R. Hall.*

If Christ be not in our hearts, we are godless ; if He be there without our joy, we are senseless ; if we rejoice in Him and speak not of Him, we are shamefully unthankful. As I will think of Thee always, O Lord, so it shall be my joy to speak of Thee often ; and if I find not opportunity, I will make it. *Bishop H.*

God wants every Christian to be a Gospel messenger, preaching the Word of life ; a godly philanthropist doing good deeds. The supremest thing for us in this world is to tell the good news. Not to be rich or famous or given to luxury, but to live for Christ and for those whom He came to save. To make Christ better known. There is not a single exception to this ; no one is exempt. For this end God gives us time, and opportunity, and money, and health, and a city full of people. For this end He educates us spiritually and disciplines us. For this end He puts us even in the furnace of affliction. God wants us to have such an appreciation of the Gospel and such a love and burden for souls that we cannot remain silent. His whole aim and purpose in His dealings with us is to make us Gospel responsive. *Gregg.*

12. The saints are the religious instructors of the race ; they ought to be not only the historians of the past, but the bards of the present, whose duty it is to keep the sons of men in memory of the great deeds which the Lord did in the days of their fathers and in the old time before them. *S.*

The glory of the majesty of His kingdom. This government is a perfect kingdom. He hath majesty for His crown, mercy for His seat, and justice for His sceptre. He hath wisdom for His counsellor, almightiness for His guard, and eternity for His date. He hath heaven for His palace, the earth for His foot-stool, and hell for His prison. He hath laws to which nature assents and reason subscribes, that do not fetter us but free us, for by them nature gets the wings of grace and transcends the earth. Reason gets the eyes of faith, and ascends up to heaven. He hath a yoke, indeed, but it is easy ; a burthen, but it is light. His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He is established in His sovereignty, not by His subjects' election of Him, but by His election of His subjects ; not

as raising Himself to a higher title, but as humbling Himself to a lower calling ; and as not receiving it from a predecessor who is before all, so never leaving it to a successor, who is after all. *R. Baker.*

13. *Thy reign is a reign of all eternities, and Thy dominion in generation and generation.* These words are also found in Dan. 3 : 33 ; 4 : 31. The meaning of the last clause is, Thy dominion still exists and shall exist in every successive generation. *A.*—The point upon which the Psalmist's mind rests is the eternity of the Divine throne, "Thy reign is a reign of all eternities." The Lord's kingdom is without beginning, without break, without bound, and without end. None can overthrow His power, or break away from His rule. Neither this age, nor the age to come, nor ages of ages shall cause His sovereignty to fail. Herein is rest for faith. "The Lord sitteth King forever." "*And Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*" *S.*

On the door of the old mosque in Damascus, which was once a Christian church, but for twelve centuries has ranked among the holiest of the Mohammedan sanctuaries, are inscribed these memorable words : "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." Though the name of Christ has been regularly blasphemed, and the disciples of Christ regularly cursed for twelve hundred years within it, the inscription has, nevertheless, remained unimpaired by time, and undisturbed by man. It was unknown during the long reign of Mohammedan intolerance and oppression ; but when religious liberty was partially restored, and the missionaries were enabled to establish a Christian church in that city, it was again brought to light, encouraging them in their work of faith and labor of love. *Anon.*

13, 14. These verses combine the magnificence of unlimited power with the assiduity of unlimited tenderness. It is this combination which men are apt to regard as well-nigh incredible, supposing that a Being so great as God can never concern Himself with beings so inconsiderable as themselves. Tell them that God lifteth up those that be bowed down, and they cannot imagine that His kingdom and dominion are unbounded ; or tell them, on the other hand, of the greatness of His empire, and they think it impossible that He should uphold all that fall. *Melvill.*

14. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that be bowed down. Think of the Infinite bowing to lift

up the bowed, and stooping to be leaned upon by those who are ready to fall. The two "alls" should not be overlooked; the Lord has a kindly heart toward the whole company of the afflicted. S.—The words do not apply to those who are indifferent to God and who wilfully defy His law. The Psalmist settles that in a single verse. "The Lord preserveth all them that love Him, but all the wicked will He destroy." They apply to those who honor God; who are trying to keep their lives pure and to make them useful. He lifts them up, upholds them, and helps them to walk in His way. It is the steps of a good man that are ordered. The Word throws less light upon reward than upon duty. Enough, indeed, to stimulate duty, but the Word is a lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path. Paul says, summing up the result of the life-battle, "Having done all *to stand*." Oh merciful, wise, tender love, which, even while it denies what we long for, bends over us while we lie prone and weeping over our disappointment, and sets us on our feet again and bids us follow God and not the devices and desires of our own hearts. . . . God sometimes upholds and raises by a disappointment. Sometimes it seems as if God's policy toward a man is to keep him down, and yet keep him walking and working. That develops the highest type of moral heroism. It is a higher and greater thing for an unsuccessful and disappointed man to keep rising from his failures and to struggle on his way leaning on God's hand to the very end, than for him to succeed before the world. God has a testimony to bear to the world *through* His sons and daughters no less than *to* them; and He bears that testimony most emphatically in showing the world that His hand can keep a man a man, with an honest soul and a persistent purpose in him, amid all his falls and disappointments. . . . The difference between a Christian and a man of the world does not lie in stumbling or not stumbling, but in the whole attitude of the man toward his stumbles and falls. It would be strange, indeed, if the man who sets himself to fight his way to heaven in the face of such a world as this and of the whole spiritual power of darkness, should not now and then fall into a snare or receive a blow that brings him to the ground. God nowhere promises that a believer shall walk straight on with upright carriage and serene front, compassed with the calm of holiness all the way to heaven. He tells him rather that Christian life is a wrestle. What He is specially concerned about, the point where He brings His own Divine forces into the

field, is the way in which the man shall bear himself in this struggle. He does promise that sin shall not have dominion over him; that though he struggles all the way to heaven, and marks his progress with a series of falls, he shall mark it also with a series of risings, and shall fall and rise and struggle through to victory. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." God will bring him at last, a saved man, out of the soil and the bruises. He will uphold him, not in sinning, but in the fight with sin. But this promise is to the honest-hearted, to the man who goes bravely and trustfully into the fight with all its certainties of blow and downfall.

Take courage, then. The great thing for you is that God is on your side. Try your best to walk without falling. Lean heavily on His hand. Keep your eye on Him; keep your purpose steadfast to overcome the world. When the falls do come, think only of that hand and grasp it. When conscience tells you you are not what you should be, and reproaches you for what you are, say, "With God's help I will get farther from what I am, and nearer to what I ought to be. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me; and as for life's failures and disappointments, if He see fit to disappoint me, it is still His hand in the disappointment, His hand that raiseth up them that are bowed down." V.

15-17. The doubts and difficulties which consideration of God's dealings will necessarily excite will best be dealt with by pondering the every-day mercies which are showered upon the world. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee," etc. There is not in this creation a single living thing which is not perpetually drawing upon God, and so literally dependent on His care and bounty that a moment's suspension of His operations would suffice to extinguish its vital principle. Who can fear that, because God's ways are unsearchable, they may not be all tending to the final good of His creatures, when he knows that, with the tenderness of a most affectionate parent, this Creator and Governor ministers to the meanest living thing? Who can distrust God, because clouds and darkness are round about him, when there is light enough to show that He is the vigilant guardian of every tenant of this earth, that His hand upholds, and His breath animates, and His bounty nourishes the teeming hordes of the city, and the desert, and the ocean? Is this a God of whom to be suspicious? Is this a God to mistrust? Oh! surely if you will fortify yourselves by such facts as these, "Thou, O Lord,

satisfiest the desire of every living thing." *"The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season,"* you will be able at all times and in all circumstances to join heartily in the acknowledgment of the Psalmist, *"The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works."* Melvill.

16. Science demonstrates two things: First, that the organization of every sentient being is contrived for happiness—that every faculty, sense, limb, vessel, and fibre are so adjusted as to conduce to the well-being of the whole, so that the movement of each yields gratification. Its keen eye has never yet detected, in the case of any creature, one single constituent of his existence which he could regard as intended to give pain. Not one of the countless myriads of sentient vessels can he find "fitted for destruction." And, secondly, science demonstrates that the external sphere of each sentient being has suitable provisions for its happiness. Through all the realms of animal nature into which philosophy has gone, from the tiniest insect up to man, there is found in the ordained sphere of each creature a supply for every want, an object for every desire, a pleasure to penetrate every sense. Anon.

Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Thou alone providest, O Jehovah! Thou doest it liberally, with open hand; thou doest it easily, as if it were only to open Thine hand. These verses refer to natural providence; but they may equally well apply to the stores of grace, since the same God is king in both spheres. If we will but wait upon the Lord for pardon, renewing, or whatever else we need, we shall not wait in vain. The hand of grace is never closed while the sinner lives. S.

If there be any desires in us which are not satisfied, it is through their being self-created ones, which is our own fault; or through artificial scarcity from men's luxury, which is the fault of our species. God raises no desires as our Creator, but He gives enough to satisfy them; and none as our Redeemer and Sanctifier but what shall be actually satisfied. Oh, the wonderful munificence of God! "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" A. Fuller.

It may be good that we should have to trust Him even when the storehouse is empty; it may be good for us to know something of want; but that discipline comes seldom, and is never carried very far. God's machinery for distribution is perfect, and its very perfection, with the constancy of the resulting blessings, robs Him

of His praise and hinders our gratitude. And we may apply the same thought of the unbroken continuity of God's gifts to the higher region of our spiritual experience. His supplies of wisdom, love, joy, peace, power, to our souls are always enough and more than enough for our wants. He means that there should be no parentheses of famine in our Christian life. The source is full to overflowing, and there are no limits to the supply. The only limit is our capacity, which, again, is largely determined by our desire. A. M.

18. The God of the Scriptures transcends any limiting conception. "He inhabiteth eternity;" "He filleth all things." Philosophy may talk ever so proudly, she can never go beyond this. His unchangeable abode is the infinity of time and space, and yet He thinks the finite truly, as finite, and as it is thought by the finite intelligence. This is the transcending mystery of the Bible; it presents both these wondrous aspects of Deity, and that, too, without betraying, on the part of the Divine messengers, any feeling of dissonance, any misgiving sense of contradiction. God is so far off that all differences of space and rank vanish before Him, and yet is He "nigh, very nigh to every soul that calleth upon Him." T. Lewis.

Call upon Him in truth. The holiness of a prayer is not at all concerned in the manner of its expression, but in the spirit of it—that is, in the earnestness of its desires, the innocence of its ends, and the continuance of its employment. This is the verification of that great prophecy which Christ made, that in "all the world the true worshippers should worship in spirit and in truth"—that is, with a pure mind, with holy desires for spiritual things, according to the mind of the Spirit, in the imitation of Christ's intercession, with perseverance, with charity, or love. Bishop Taylor.

To call upon God in truth is, first, to repose an implicit confidence in the faithfulness of His promise, and to look for unlimited answers to prayer from the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus. But it is also, in the next place, to feel our own urgent need of the things for which we supplicate, and to realize an earnest and unfeigned concern to obtain them. "What things ye desire when ye pray," said the Lord, "believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them;" and hence we gather that the hearty desire, arising out of the consciousness of need, is an integral and inseparable part of genuine and effectual prayer. T. Dale.

18, 19. God's people are a praying people,

a generation of seekers, and such commonly are speeders. God never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face in vain. They seek His face, righteousness and strength, and He is found of them. The saints alone betake themselves to God and His help, run to Him as their sanctuary. They only sensibly need, and so alone crave and implore, Divine succor ; and God will not suffer His people to lose the precious treasure of their prayers. "*The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him ; He will fulfil their desire, He will hear their cry.*" That God who prepares His people's heart to pray, prepares also His own ear to hear ; and He that promiseth to hear before we call, will never deny to hearken when we cry unto Him. As Calvin saith, "Oppressions and afflictions make man cry, and cries and supplications make God hear." *Anon.*

18-20. "Nigh to those who call upon Him *in truth,*" makes "*in truth*" emphatic, and suggests that sometimes men nominally, apparently, call upon God with no real sincerity, no sense of dependence, no feeling of want, no humble uplifting of the heart for His gracious help. To such callers God is by no means nigh. The real call that rises from a full and earnest soul, a broken and humble spirit, He can never despise. The Psalmist defines their character as those that "fear Him" and "love Him." C.—To genuine suppliant Jehovah is present—viz., in grace (for in His might He is everywhere) ; He fulfils the desire of them that fear Him, inasmuch as their will is also His, and grants them the salvation for which they pray. Those who in v. 19 were called those that fear Him, are called those that love Him in v. 20, after the example of the Decalogue. Fear and love of God belong inseparably together, for fear without love is an unfree, servile state of mind, and love without fear is audacious familiarity ; the one dishonors the all-gracious One, the other the all-exalted One. All those, however, that love and fear Him, He preserves, while, on the other hand, He exterminates all wanton sinners. D.

When God is slow in giving He only sets off His own gifts to advantage, He does not withhold them. Blessings long desired are sweeter when they come ; if soon given, they lose much of their value. God reserves for you that which He is slow to give you, that you may learn to entertain a supreme desire and longing after it. *Augustine.*—Thou desirest to be rid of thy present trouble ; the Lord shall rid thee out of trouble. Thou desirest to be delivered from temptation ; the Lord shall deliver

thee out of temptation. Thou desirest to be delivered from thy body of death ; and the Lord shall change this thy vile body, that it may be like to His glorious body. Thou desirest to be in the presence of God, and among the angels in heaven ; this thy desire also shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt be made equal to the angels. "Oh, but it is long first." Well, learn first to live upon thy portion in the promise of it, and that will make thy expectation of it sweet. God will fulfil thy desires ; God will do it, though it tarry long : "Wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." *Bunyan.*

If the apparently ruthless march of events in the world's history seems sometimes to thrust us and our concerns all out of sight, here is the answer. God is not a man, to whom there is a difference between great and small. He can, and He alone can, reconcile the happiness, the holiness, the true interest of every soul with the real good of the whole ; and though He is ruling the world, He is still the Father, and the loving Father, of every one of us. That yearning prayer which brings us nearer to Him, because it expresses our dependence on Him, shall assuredly be satisfied, even if it appear to be refused. A day will come when we shall look back on all the prayers which have gone up from our inmost hearts, and shall see that even those which have been most plainly denied have yet been, wonderful to say, most plainly granted. We shall see that, had we known what we then shall have learned, precisely that very thing has been done which our consciences would have bid us pray for ; and that our prayer, so far from being unheard, has been treasured up in the counsels of God. It is this tender regard for each man's own longings, own wants ; this watching over the movements and the needs of every separate soul ; this fatherly care ; this never-sleeping love ; which Christ promises in His Father's name. We know not precisely what is best for us. We know not what will make us truly happy. We know not what will help us best in our struggle against temptations. And if *we* were to try to make a distinction between our mere passing wishes and that which our souls really needed, we should utterly fail. But we need not try. Let us take all our wishes, all our longings, all the promptings of our consciences, to the feet of our Father. He will hear and He will do. He will hear all we say. He will know what parts of our prayer are best for us to have, and what are not. And He will give us what His Fatherly love will choose. And therefore to

all our prayers we will add, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." For this is the corresponding feeling on our parts. The answer to absolute care and infinite love is absolute resignation and absolute trust. The resignation and the trust are bound together. We must be resigned because we trust. *Bishop Temple.*

It was one of the infrequent expressions of his inner life by the late Professor Stuart: "I have learned that the value of prayer depends not so much on its intensity in moods, or its regularity in times, as on its constancy as a continuous way of living. We need to live in a state of prayer." Suffering had taught him that. Few men reach that discovery, except through some sort of disciplinary trial. In spiritual experience, necessity is the mother of discovery, as it is of invention in the material world. Prayer as a state of holy living is abundantly recognized in Scripture. "Pray without ceasing." "Continuing instant in prayer." "In everything by prayer . . . let your requests be made known." "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication." And far back in the elder dispensation David said, "At evening and morning and noon will I pray." Constancy of devotional desire is inborn in the spirit of holy living. Augustine, Madame Guion, John Tauler, President Edwards, Edward Payson, and a host of others, were often overheard in fragmentary colloquy with God. Luther indulged with such freedom of speech in this sort of converse with God that in almost any other man it would have been irreverent. Zinzendorf used to write notes to "the Lord Christ." So strong was his faith in Christ's personal friendship, and his own need of that friendship as a daily solace, that once on a journey he sent back his companion that he might converse more freely with the Lord, with whom he talked audibly. Thomas à Kempis says: "He alone is a thousand companions; He alone is a world of friends. That man never knew what it was to be familiar with God, who complains of the want of friends while God is with him." *Phelps.*

The key to the real life of godliness, intellectual, devotional, and practical, lies in "devotion." The man of God must be the man of prayer, and he who prays best will live best. What we all want is a more complete and perfect system and habit of both private and public devotion. That will, of course, include meditation, or the devout study of God's Holy

Word, and no other study than a devout study is worth mentioning. Above all, it must begin and end in a contemplation of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of us all. It is He whom we must set before us at the beginning of our prayers; it is through Him we must pray, and it is to Him we must look for the answer to our prayers. And because devotion brings us nearer to Christ, because it puts Christ and Christ crucified before us as the very object of worship, meditation, contemplation, and action, therefore it is that the key to a life of godliness lies in a life of devotion. *Bishop of Chichester.*

20. That love Him. Every man must go out of himself for enjoyment. Something in this universe besides himself there must be to bind the affections of every man. There is that within us which compels us to attach ourselves to something outward. There is a pent-up energy of love, gigantic for good or evil. Its right way is in the direction of our eternal Father, and then, let it boil and pant as it will, the course of the man is smooth. Expel the love of God from the heart, and then we have the riot of worldliness—a man of strong affections thrown off the line, tearing himself to pieces, and carrying desolation along with him. F. W. R.—If Christ ever wins the fort of the soul, the conquest must begin in the affections; for the understanding and will seem to be like a castle or fortified place; there is strength indeed in them, but the affections are the soldiers who manage those holds. The opposition is from these; and if the soldiers surrender, the place itself, though never so strong, cannot resist. *South.*

The Lord preserveth all them that love Him. They keep Him in their love, and He keeps them by His love. See how these favored ones have advanced from fearing the Lord and crying to Him, even to loving Him, and in that love they are secure from all danger. Mark the number of "alls" in these later verses of the Psalm. In each of these God is all in all. S.

Sublimely the Psalmist closes with declaring his own personal purpose: "My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah"—now and evermore, with this mortal tongue and this human pen, now; and with my immortal song through the ages of the eternal future. And "let all flesh, all of human kind, men of every nation, bless His holy name forever, all along down the lapse of years till time shall be no more; and then begin their truly everlasting song! C.

PSALM CXLVI.

1 PRAISE YE THE LORD.

Praise the LORD, O my soul.

■ While I live will I praise the LORD :

I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

■ Put not your trust in princes,

Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ;

In that very day his thoughts perish.

5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,

Whose hope is in the LORD his God :

6 Which made heaven and earth,

The sea, and all that in them is ;

Which keepeth truth for ever :

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed ;

Which giveth food to the hungry :

The LORD looseth the prisoners ;

8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind ;

The LORD raiseth up them that are bowed down ;

The LORD loveth the righteous ;

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers ;

He upholdeth the fatherless and widow ;

But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever,

Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.

PRAISE YE THE LORD.

THE remaining are all *Praise-songs*, each commencing with "HALLELUJAH ;" i.e., a call to all the people to praise the Lord. Noticeably this word belongs to the later Hebrew, not being found in any Psalm ascribed to David, nor indeed in any of the Psalms of the first three books. In the Psalms of the age of the restoration it occurs very frequently. These Psalms obviously belong to the age of the restoration. C.

These closing Psalms are impassioned calls to the *universal* praise of God. The vast whole of the visible and rational as well as the invisible and irrational creation is here summoned to praise the Lord. For His blessings upon the earth ; for His glories in the heavens ; for His rich, abundant bounties and His ever watchful and sustaining providences ; for His wisdom, and power, and goodness, and especially for His sovereign mercy to man ; for His love and grace to the Church, for the constitution of her ordinances, for the power He hath given unto her, and the final exaltation which He hath promised her—for all these blessings and hopes the inspired singer exhorts the universe of celestial, terrestrial, rational, and sentient creatures to unite in one general song of ardent, grateful praise. Above all and with peculiar distinction is the exhortation addressed to man, the temporary and accountable ruler of the earth ; to those who behold and comprehend His wise and wondrous working. B.

As we get toward the end, and as the book closes, it is *Hallelujah, praise*. As the ancient Church ceases to speak to us, as she lays down her lyre and ceases to touch it, the last tones are tones of heaven ; as if the warfare were done, the conflict accomplished, and she were anticipating either the revelations which are to make her glorious here, the "new thing" which God is about to "create" when He places her under another dispensation, or as you and I (I trust) shall do when we come to die, anticipating the praise and occupation of that eternity and rest for which we hope in the bosom of God. *Binney*.

The perfect naturalness of the Psalms appears, perhaps, most forcibly in their exultant freedom and joyousness of heart. It is true, as Lord Bacon says, that "if you listen to David's harp you will hear as many hearse-like airs as carols ;" yet still the carols are found there more than anywhere else. "Rejoice in the Lord." "Sing ye merrily." "Make a cheerful noise." "Take the Psalm, bring hither the tabret, the merry harp, with the lute." "Oh, praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God." "A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful." This, in fact, is the very meaning of the word "Psalm." The one Hebrew word which is their very pith and marrow is "Hallelujah." They express, if we may so say, the sacred duty of being happy. Be happy, cheerful, and

thankful as ever we can, we cannot go beyond the Psalms. *Stanley.*

1. *Hallelujah! Praise, oh my soul, Jehovah!* The *Hallelujah* never appears in any Psalm which bears the name of David, and is indeed as characteristic of the later Psalms as the *Selah* is of the more ancient. A.

2. The prevailing character of the Divine revelation is joyful; and this appears in its psalmody. The Gospel, to all who understand it aright, is melody—music; the highest harmony of God with man, of man with man, of man with himself. It is throughout a noble hymn, swelling to the strain, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will to men;" and he who enters fully into its spirit cannot but have his soul suffused with a sacred joy that will overflow in utterance of praise. *Ker.*—Praise calls into exercise the highest faculties and affections of our nature. It requires little more than animal instinct to tell our wants and plead for relief with the importunity that cries *give, give*. But praise lifts us to a higher sphere and employs our noblest powers. There is no prayer in heaven, but God *inhabits* the praises of eternity. Praise puts us in the best receiving attitude before God. It opens the heart that He may come in and sup with us. H. J. V.

Alas for that capital crime of the Lord's people, barrenness in praises! Oh, how fully I am persuaded that a line of praises is worth a leaf of prayer, and an hour of praises is worth a day of fasting and mourning! *J. Livingstone.*

4. The primary idea of *breath* and the secondary one of *spirit* run into each other in the usage of the Hebrew word, *ruah*, so that either may be expressed in the translation without entirely excluding the other.

His breath (or spirit) goeth forth. The spirit goeth free or inviolate in essence; death is not the end, but the outgoing of the soul, a transmigration or journey from one place to another. "*It goeth forth*;" so the character of our weakness we see in the issue; it is an argument of our eternity; for man indeed is perishing, but so is not his spirit. The phoenix goes forth or out of his ashes, "the spirit returneth to God who gave it;" that is, it abides still; and as in the body it pleased God to enclose the soul for a season, so it may as well exist elsewhere without it, if God will; for it hath no rise at all from the clay; yea, it bears in it immortality, an image of that breast whence it is breathed. *T. Williamson.*

He returneth to his earth. The earth is "*his*." It is "*his*" as it is the only property which he

has in reversion. All that a man—a prince, a nobleman, a monarch, a millionaire—will soon have will be his grave, his few feet of earth. That will be his by the fact that for the time being he will occupy it, and not another man! But that, too, may soon become another man's grave, so that even there he is a tenant only for a time; he has no permanent possession *even of a grave.* *Barnes.*

His thoughts perish. With his breath his thoughts, or "purposes," or "schemes," however grand the conception, however masterly the execution, all come to an end. The science, the philosophy, the statesmanship of one age is exploded in the next. The men who are the masters of the world's intellect to-day are discredited to-morrow. In this age of restless and rapid change they may survive their own thoughts; their thoughts do not survive them. P.

All the thinkings of men that are not really and thoroughly true, however beautiful and magnificent they may be, and whatever favor they may find with their parents or with man to whom they are presented, when men come to die they will find that they all perish and become nothing if they are not true; when the mind enters into the world of truth, pure truth and intellect, it will find it can carry nothing but truth with it. We may apply this to purposes, projects, and intentions: "In that very day his thoughts perish." *Binney.*—As the purposes of all about worldly things perish in the approaches of death, so do the purposes of some about spiritual and heavenly things. How many have had purposes to repent, to amend their lives and turn to God, which have been prevented and totally broken off by the extremity of pain and sickness, but chiefly by the stroke of death when they have (as they thought) "been about to repent." *Caryl.*

The sowers for earth *have* their harvest here: Success in their schemes; quiet, intellectual enjoyment; exemption from pain and loss; the fruits of worldly-wise sagacity. And that is all. "When the breath goeth forth they return to their dust and all their thoughts perish." The grave is not to them the gate of paradise, but simply the impressive mockery which the hand of death writes upon that body for which they lived, and with which all is gone. They reap corruption, for all they have toiled for decays! F. W. R.

Whose hope is in the Lord. In spiritual as in earthly things there is great strength in hope, and therefore God's people are carefully to cultivate that grace. A well-

grounded hope that having been made new creatures in Jesus Christ we are His ; that with our names, though unknown to fame, written in the Book of Life we have grace in possession and heaven in prospect ; that after a few more brief years, pure as the angels that sing before the throne, we shall be brought with gladness into the palace of the King, to be like Christ, and with Christ, seeing Him eye to eye and face to face—such hopes are powerful springs of action. The source of a peace that passeth understanding, nothing could be better calculated to wean our affections from the world and deepen our abhorrence of sin, and inflame our desires to be holy as God is holy. *Guthrie.*

Hope is the ease ; yea, the life of our hearts, which would otherwise break and even die within us. Despair is no small part of hell. God cherishes hope, as He is the lover of souls. Satan, our enemy, cherishes despair when his more usual way of presumption fails. Hope anticipates salvation as fear does evil. It is the hypocrite's hope that perishes, and all who hope for durable happiness on earth must be deceived. But "happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, which keepeth truth forever." Woe to me "if in this life only I had hope." But the righteous hath hope in his death. And hope maketh him not ashamed. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. "Lay hold," then, oh my soul, "upon the hope set before thee ;" it is thy "sure and steadfast anchor," without which thou wilt be as a shipwrecked vessel. It is an encouraging grace ; it excites our "diligence," and helps "to full assurance unto the end." It is a desiring grace, and is earnest to obtain the glory hoped for. It is a comforting grace, for "the God of hope fills us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Shake off despondency, oh my soul, "and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." *Baxter.*

The assurance of hope rests on the promises of God. It is allied to faith ; nay, it grows out of faith, and it increases with the increase of faith. It results from a firm, unshaken trust in God's gracious declarations. To see ourselves accepted, we must previously "see the things that are freely given us of God." As it is the open view of Gospel promises of free salvation through Jesus Christ which first brings us into vital union with our Redeemer, so it is the further application of the same promises to our own case, the seeing of ourselves as included in

them, which gives us the joy of assurance. J. W. A.

6. Two reasons are here given for relying upon God : His almighty power as exercised and proved in the creation of the world, and His unchangeable fidelity. A.—He who made heaven can make a heaven for us, and make us fit for heaven. He who made the earth can preserve us while we are on earth, and help us to make good use of it while we sojourn upon it. He who made the sea and all its mysteries can steer us across the pathless deeps of a troubled life and make it a way for His redeemed to pass over. This God who still makes the world by keeping it in existence is assuredly able to keep us to His eternal kingdom and glory. *Which keepeth truth forever.* This is a second and most forcible justification of our trust ; the Lord will never permit His promise to fail. He is true to His own nature, true to the relationships which He has assumed, true to His covenant, true to His Word, true to His Son. S.

Truth is a word of frequent occurrence and of wide signification in the Bible. The primary meaning of the Greek word is openness. But in the Hebrew the primary idea of truth is that which sustains, which does not fail or disappoint our expectations. The true, therefore, is that which can be depended upon, which does not fail, or change, or disappoint. In this sense God is true as He is immutable and faithful. His promise cannot fail ; His Word never disappoints. His Word abideth forever. When our Lord says, "Thy Word is truth," He says that all that God has revealed may be confided in as exactly corresponding to what really is, or is to be. His Word can never fail, though heaven and earth pass away. *C. Hodge.*—He is one "who keepeth truth forever." It is the central thought of the Psalm. For on this ground beyond all others is God the object of trust. He is true and His Word is truth, and that Word He keeps, not for a time, but forever.

7-9. These verses portray God's character as a ruler. It is such a God who is Zion's King (v. 10). Such an one men may trust, for He is not like the princes of the earth (v. 3). P.

8. The Lord openeth the eyes. Here and everywhere the Scripture assumes that only those who have received Christ are really awake and truly see. Other men walk about like those that walk in their sleep. Objects are shadowy and indistinct to them. They do not seem to realize whither they are going, nor by what they are surrounded. They seem not to see or to be fastened only upon dreamlike fancies. The

Christian is awake. He has done dreaming. He alone truly sees. What is *shadow* and what is *substance* is clear to him. Illusions have vanished. Earth, man, and time look to him as they are. *Light upon the reality of things shines only in Christ.* A. L. Stone.

9. *Jehovah preserves strangers ; orphan and widow He relieves ; and the way of wicked men makes crooked.* The stranger, the orphan, and the widow are constantly presented in the Law as objects of compassion and beneficence. *Relieves*, restores, raises up from their low condition. As a straight path is an emblem of prosperity, to render one's path crooked is to involve him in calamity. A.—*He turneth aside.* Rendered by the E. V. in Ecclesiastes, "made crooked." That which happens in the course of God's providence, and as the inevitable result of His righteous laws, is usually ascribed in Scripture to His immediate agency. P.

The way of the wicked He turneth upside down. He overturns their plans, defeats their schemes, makes their purposes accomplish what they did not intend they should accomplish. The Hebrew word here means to bend, to curve, to make crooked, to distort ; then, to overturn, to turn upside down. The same word is applied to the conduct of the wicked in Psalm 119 : 78 : "They dealt perversely with me." This is the eleventh reason why those who put their trust in God are happy. It is that God is worthy of confidence and love, because He has all the plans of wicked men entirely under His control. *Barnes.*

A striking illustration of the folly of counting God out of one's plans for life is given in the course of William M. Tweed. Here was a man who sought wealth and power, and who for a time seemed successful in their pursuit. Apparently he did not propose to obey God or to live for a life to come. What he wanted was worldly prosperity. He thought he had it. He went to Congress. He gathered his millions. He controlled the material interests of the metropolis of his country. He openly defied public sentiment and courts of justice in the prosecution of his plans. He was a brilliant and therefore a dangerous example of successful villainy. But the promise of prosperity for the life which now is is only to the godly. As Tweed lay dying in a prison-house in the city he once ruled, his confession of bitter disappointment was, "My life has been a failure in everything. There is nothing I am proud of." If any young man wants to come to an end like this, the way to it is simple and plain. "The great God that formed all things both reward-

eth the fool and rewardeth transgressors." S. S. T.

10. And the beauty and glory of the case is that this precious, munificent, and righteous reign shall endure forever ! The very God of Zion is to sit on the throne of the heavens and the earth through all generations. Oh, give His name all praise ! C.

Let our voices be in harmony with our conduct, lest haply our good voices give testimony against our evil conduct. Oh, what a happy Alleluia in heaven, where angels are the temple of God ! For there must be the most perfect harmony of those who sing praise, where the singers enjoy a gladness free from anxiety ; where no war in the members wars against the law of the mind ; where there is no conflict with appetite wherein the victory of love can be endangered. Here, then, let us sing Alleluia while we are still in anxiety, that we may be able some day to sing it there free from anxiety. Even here, amid dangers, amid temptations, let Alleluia be sung both by ourselves and by others. For, it is written, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Therefore let us even in this world sing Alleluia. Man is still guilty ; but God is faithful. Oh, what a happy Alleluia in the world to come ! Oh, how free from anxieties ! Oh, how free from adversaries ! where no enemy will exist, where no friend is lost. Praises to God there, and praises to God here ; but here sung by those that are anxious, there by those who are freed from anxiety ; here by those who must die, there by those who will live forever ; here in hope, there in possession of reality ; here in the Way, there in the Country. Therefore let us sing for the solace of our toil ; even as travellers are wont to sing, cheer thy toil by singing ; sing, and walk on. Now, indeed, the glory of our God, the glory of our Christ is hidden, and with Him our own also is hidden. "But when Christ, your Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Then there shall be Alleluia in reality ; now we have it in hope. Hope sings it, love sings it now, love shall also sing it then ; but now love sings it hungering, then love will sing it enjoying. Behold, you now hear the Word, and take delight in hearing it ; and in your delight you praise God. If you love the dewdrops so much, how greatly will you love the actual fountain ! *Augustine.*

Song, Secular and Spiritual. Its Adaptations and Uses.

Song, secular or sacred, is *natural*, in accord-

ance with and demanded by our material and spiritual being. It is *physically* beneficial. It stirs the bodily energies and gives intensity and recruiting power to daily toil. It has special exclusive adaptations to our social nature. It is demanded by the social element in all intelligent creatures. *Hail-fellowship* among worldly men and *holy fellowship* among holy beings, angels and men, were impossible without it. It is the only vehicle by which mutual sentiments, tastes and sympathies can find common, simultaneous expression. It is the mighty instrument by which these sentiments, tastes, and sympathies, be they degrading or elevating, impure or holy, are deepened, strengthened, made more active and effective for evil or good. A single song was one of the most potent instrumentalities in achieving the French Revolution. A single choral of Martin Luther, with its Doxology, in various tongues, has contributed vastly to the advance of a pure Reformed Christianity over the earth.

More than these physical and social effects is the influence of song upon the spiritual nature, upon the mind, the heart. Constituted man is with a susceptibility in every faculty to be touched and stirred to life and enjoyment by harmonious sounds. True harmony, so far as its own proper influence goes, is only quickening and beneficial alike to the understanding, the will, and the emotions. It refreshes, invigorates, stimulates, and elevates the tone of thought, of purpose, of aspiration, and feeling. Even upon the worldly spirit it has this effect. The voice of tender, plaintive song is the only thing that ever excites a serious thought or an unselfish desire in some world-loving, self-seeking souls. But to the Christian it is a most powerful impulse, a most blessed help, solace, joy. It comes in to aid and cheer in all his experiences—toiling, struggling, fainting, rejoicing, sorrowing, living, and dying. Sacred song, springing from and expressing the soul of devotion, quickens into activity every spiritual grace of the believer; it helps to exalt, refine, and expand his whole spiritual being. It calls out most naturally and exercises most purely and effectively penitence, submission, gratitude, faith, and love. It aids him in the labors, the cares, the discouragements of life; in his struggles with temptation; in his burdening sense of unworthiness and guilt; in his endurance of trouble, pain, and affliction. It calms the troubled waves of his soul as did the voice of

Jesus the stormy sea. When, in its wearying toils and wearing cares, in its deepest heart struggles and griefs, the trusting soul breaks forth in tenderest, sweetest songs, it is sustained and comforted, it is possessed with peace and joy, while it gathers strength and courage for future struggle and duty. "Nothing comforts me more in my greatest sufferings," said Baxter, "or seems more fit for me while I wait for death, than singing Psalms of praise to God."

And as these are the blessed effects of devotional song upon the believer's spiritual life, so we know that the deepest feelings of the Christian do always find the most natural channel for their flow in such song. President Edwards writes: "I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance, and in the day spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time singing forth with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer." "I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunderstorm, and used to take the opportunity at such times to view the clouds and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplation of my glorious God. While thus engaged it always seemed natural to me to sing or chant forth my meditations, or to put my thoughts in soliloquies with a singing voice." It has been thus with the most eminent saints. *Living*, they have found their sweetest, tenderest devotion and their deepest comfort, their simplest trust and their loftiest aspirations, their purest gratitude and their warmest affection, their firmest assurance, their brightest hopes, and their highest rapture in the same sacred songs of Zion. And to the dying Christian how precious, how comforting, how blessed these songs, as (we all well know) almost every death of the earnest, fervent believer testifies. Nearer as such an one has drawn to the presence of Jesus, has the music of that name refreshed the soul the more. Nearer as such an one has drawn to the glory and the joy of the ransomed throng, has he participated or desired to hear those songs of gratitude and praise which form a chief part in their Divine and lasting employ. By considerations conclusive, powerful, and touching as these—considerations personal to each—is the duty of sacred song in God's worship, in the closet, the family, and pre-eminently in the sanctuary urged upon all. B.

PSALM CXLVII.

1 PRAISE YE THE LORD.

- For it is good to sing praises unto our God ;
 For it is pleasant, *and* praise is comely.
- 2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem ;
 He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
- 3 He healeth the broken in heart,
 And bindeth up their wounds.
- 4 He telleth the number of the stars ;
 He giveth them all their names.
- 5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power ;
 His understanding is infinite.
- 6 The LORD upholdeth the meek :
 He bringeth the wicked down to the ground.
- 7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving ;
 Sing praises upon the harp unto our God :
- 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds,
 Who prepareth rain for the earth,
 Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
- 9 He giveth to the beast his food,
And to the young ravens which cry.
- 10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse :
 He taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man.
- 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him,

In those that hope in his mercy.

- 12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem ;
 Praise thy God, O Zion.
- 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates ;
 He hath blessed thy children within thee.
- 14 He maketh peace in thy borders ;
 He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat
- 15 He sendeth out his commandment upon earth ;
 His word runneth very swiftly.
- 16 He giveth snow like wool ;
 He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes
- 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels :
 Who can stand before his cold ?
- 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them :
 He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.
- 19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob,
 His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
- 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation :
 And as for his judgments, they have not known them.
- PRAISE YE THE LORD !

Jehovah the Builder of Jerusalem.

It can scarcely be doubted that this Psalm has special reference to the restoration of Jerusalem after the captivity in Babylon, and it was probably used at the celebration of that joyful event recorded in Neh. 12 : 27-43. From beginning to end the poet connects God's special goodness to Israel, as now manifested, with His infinite power, wisdom, and goodness in the natural world. *De Witt.*

The four remaining Psalms (147-150) are connected together and distinguished from what goes before by the *Hallelujah* with which they all begin and end ; by their joyous tone, unmixed with lamentation or complaint ; by their frequent allusions to some great deliverance recently experienced ; and by the peculiar way in which they bring together the exhibitions of God's glory in the works of nature and in His dealings with the Church. A.

Like the last Psalm, and like those which follow it, this is evidently an anthem intended for

the service of the second temple. It celebrates God's almighty and gracious rule over His people and over the world of nature, but mingles with this a special commemoration of His goodness in bringing back His people from their captivity and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. In the allusions to these events in vs. 2, 3, and vs. 13, 14, we shall probably be justified in seeing the occasion of the Psalm. It may have been written for the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, which, as we learn from Neh. 12 : 27, was kept "with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps." It is, indeed, not improbable, as Hengstenberg suggests, that not this Psalm only, but the rest of the Psalms to the end of the book, are all anthems originally composed for the same occasion. The wall had been built under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty and discouragement (Neh. 2 : 17-4 : 23) ; its completion was celebrated with no common joy and thankfulness ; "for God had made them rejoice with great joy ; the wives

also and the children had rejoiced ; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." See Neh. 12 : 27-43. P.

In the seventh year of Artachsasta (Artaxerxes I. Longimanus) Ezra the priest had entered Jerusalem after a journey of five months with about two thousand exiles, for the most part out of Levite families (458 B.C.). In the twentieth year of the same gracious king (445 B.C.) came Nehemiah, his cup-bearer, in the capacity of a governor (*Tirschâta*). While Ezra used every endeavor to introduce the Mosaic law once more into the consciousness and the general character of the people, Nehemiah furthered the building of the city, and more especially of the walls and gates. It is the mood of the restoration period of Ezra and Nehemiah that we hear expressed in this and the two following Psalms even more distinctly than in the closely kindred preceding one. In this Psalm God is thanked for the restoration of Jerusalem, which is now again a city with walls and gates ; in Psalm 148 for the restoration of the national independence ; and in Psalm 149 for the restoration of the capability of joyously and victoriously defending themselves to the people long rendered defenceless and ignominiously enslaved. D.

In this Psalm there is first a challenge to the worship of God, then an evoking of religious national sentiment, then a message of comfort and hope to the destitute and sorrowful, and last the interwoven theologic element in affirmation of the providence, power, and bounty of God. So throughout the devotional and poetic portions of the Hebrew Scriptures the theologic and emotional elements are so placed as to be counteractive in their influence upon the human spirit. Lest the devout affections should pass off into a feeble sentimentalism there is conjoined with the expression of emotion some reference to awe-inspiring attributes of the Divine nature ; and again, lest the meditation of infinite power and purity should lead to pantheistic mysticism, the worshipper is reminded of his frailty, his dependence, and unworthiness. I. T.

1. This verse might perhaps be better rendered with the change of a single consonant : "Praise ye Jehovah, for He is good ; sing unto our God, for He is lovely ; comely is the hymn of praise." P.—Praise is good and acceptable to God our Saviour, whose glory is the great end of man's creation and redemption ; and it is pleasant and comely for man, being the only return he can make for those and all other mercies ; the offspring of gratitude, and the ex-

pression of love ; the elevation of the soul, and the antepast of heaven ; its own reward in this life and an introduction to the felicities of the next. *Bishop Horne.*

For it is good to sing praises unto our God. It is good because it is right, because it is acceptable with God, beneficial to ourselves, and stimulating to our fellows. Singing the Divine praises is the best possible use of speech ; it speaks of God, for God, and to God, and it does this in a joyful and reverent manner. Jehovah is *our* God, our covenant God, therefore let Him have the homage of our praise ; and He is so gracious and happy a God that our praise may best be expressed in joyful song. S.—That the joyful should sing is as natural as that the afflicted should pray—rather more natural. Song as the expression of cheerfulness is something universal in human nature ; there were always, both in Israel and among all other nations, songs of joy. Hence it is constantly mentioned in the prophets, by whom joyous singing is used as a frequent figure, even as they threaten that God will take away the song of the bridegroom and the bride, and so forth. The *singing* of men is in itself good and noble. The same God who furnished the birds of heaven with the notes wherein they unconsciously praise their Creator gave to man the power to sing. As David in his day took care that there should be practised singers for the sanctuary, we also should make provision for the Church's service of song, that God may have in all respects a perfect offering. How gracious and lovely is the congregation singing with the heart acceptable songs ! *Rudolf Stier.*

God has been pleased that on every side the useful should blossom out into the beautiful, and so speech has music wedded to it like an ethereal bride. But there is a reason for song that lies deeper in man's constitution still. It is found not in the ear and voice merely, but in the spirit. God has made the inner atmosphere of the soul's emotions and affections susceptible of the thrilling pulsations of music, as He has made the atmosphere around us capable of receiving and transmitting the quivering vibrations of sound. There is a power of song that addresses itself as truly to the higher emotional nature of man, and that stirs it as deeply as the breathing thoughts and burning words of eloquence itself. *Ker.*

2, 3. In v. 2 we might read, "Jehovah is the builder of Jerusalem ;" this rebuilding, then fresh in their eyes, is the work of His hands. "He will gather the outcasts of Israel together ;" His scattered captives He will restore

to their native land and raise them again to a place of honor among the nations. The captives who sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept as they remembered Zion, the Lord has met in mercy, wiped their tears away, and bound up their heart-wounds. C.

3-5. It is a noble thing to study God's universe. It is a nobler thing to be acquainted with Himself. It is the noblest of all to unite these two; to feel the mercy of God's heart, and see the majesty of His handiwork, and to accept them both as godlike, and both as ours; "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds; He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite." The conclusion of the whole matter is that he who feels that he has a soul will find his way into a spiritual world, and he who feels that he has sin will find a Divine fitness in the Gospel of Christ. And when he embraces it, he will come to see that "the stars in all their courses" fight for that Gospel. Both revelations are worthy of God, and each, rightly considered, contributes to the fulness of the other. But of the two, the Gospel is more needful to us. The "bright and morning star" is more to our soul's firmament than all the constellations of the sky. It is needed even the more for that vastness of creation which, without its guiding light, would bewilder and blind us, for truly viewed, the Gospel, instead of requiring a defence against astronomy, stands justified by it as a grand moral and spiritual necessity. *Ker.*

4-6. The train of thought which now leads the poet to the stars is plain from the primary passage Isa. 40 : 26, 27. To be acquainted with human sorrow and to relieve it, is an easy and small matter to Him who has assigned a number to the stars, calls them all by names which are the expression of their true nature which is well known to Him, the Creator. What Isaiah says (40 : 26, 28) is expressed here in v. 5 : Great is our Lord and mighty in power, and of His understanding there is no number; *i.e.*, in its depth and fulness it is definable by no number. What a comfort for the Church upon its often labyrinthine and entangled ways! Its Lord is the Allwise as well as the Almighty. Its history is, like the universe, a work of profound and rich Divine understanding. It is a mirror of gracious love and righteous anger. Meek afflicted ones He strengthens; malevolent sinners, on the other hand, He abases to the earth, hurling deep down to the ground those who exalt themselves to the skies. D.

4. Telleth the number of the stars.

The number of the "stars," of "man's months," of his "steps," of the "hairs of his head," is fixed by like decree. Nature declares that the same hand shapes and numbers alike the ponderous planet and the falling tear; and David responds, "He telleth the number of the stars." "He healeth the broken in heart." "Put Thou my tears in Thy bottle; are they not in Thy Book?" The microscope reveals exquisite care in the adjustment of conditions for the tiny lives of the millions that tenant a raindrop. Paul says to his fellow-voyagers, leaning on the promise made to him in prayer, "There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you." Is the one conception of a minute Providence more extravagant than the other? *J. B. Thomas.*

He calleth them all by their names. Literally, "calleth names to all of them," an expression marking not only God's power in marshalling them all as a host (Isa. 40 : 26), but also the most intimate knowledge and watchful care, as that of a shepherd for his flock (John 10 : 3). P. The stars are innumerable, yet He counts them and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of His hands and the instruments of His providence; their bulk and power are very great, but *He calleth them all by their names*, which bespeaks His dominion over them to make what use of them He pleases. He musters them, He marshals them; they come and go at His bidding, and all their motions are under His direction. He mentions this as one instance of many to show that *great is our Lord and of great power*; He can do what He pleases, and of *His understanding there is no computation*, so that he can contrive everything for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained, and you have his utmost length; hitherto his wisdom can reach and no farther; but God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed. H.

6. The same Lord who with infinite power and unsearchable wisdom rules the stars in their courses rules also the world of man. The history of the world is a mirror both of His love and of His righteous anger. His rule and His order are a correction of man's anarchy and disorder.

7-11. A fresh burst of praise because of God's fatherly care, as shown in His provision for the wants of the cattle and the fowls of the air. And as He feeds the ravens, which have neither storehouse nor barn, but only cry to Him for their food, so among men His delight is not in those who trust in their own strength

and swiftness, but in those who look to *Him*, fear *Him*, put their trust in *His* goodness. P.

8, 9. One of the most prominent and striking features of this series of Psalms is the continual blending of God's agencies in nature with His works in His providential government. In the former he gives the rain of heaven and the grass on the mountains; in the latter He builds Jerusalem, restores the exiles, visits retribution of good or evil upon saints and sinners as they deserve. It seems to be a special aim with the writer (and with the inditing Spirit) to impress the great truth that the same God doeth all these things. C.

To say that beauty, and order, and adaptation reign through all ranks of being is no more than to repeat an often-told tale. Observe first, the consummate beauty of God's arrangements in regard to mute, unorganized matter, from the grand but simple law which retains the planets in their orbits to that which forms the hidden crystals in the depths of the mine, or the frostwork on the window-pane, which melts with the first sunbeam. All is full of subjects for wonder and admiration. Let us rise one step, and from unorganized matter come to organic life. Life, the special gift of God, is not the result of any combination of matter. Every portion of the frame in which it resides might be reproduced by art, but the beautiful model must wait for vitality till it is breathed down from the Creator Himself. There is no part of the earth but is full of animal life, no animal that is not a study inexhaustible in its proofs of creative wisdom and providing love. It has often struck me that the more we think of the utter incapability of the lower tribes of creation for increase of knowledge and skill, and compare it with their perfect knowledge and skill in that which is given them to do, the more do we see the present and acting power and love of God. They are so helpless, yet so full of needful resources; so unconscious of wisdom, yet so wise; so reckless of the future, yet so provident; so incapable of high motives, yet so self-devoted in their affections, that it appears to me that between these extremes in the same beings, so wonderful, so inexplicable, there must come in, living and moving, and present day by day, the will of that gracious Father, the love of that Divine Son, the working of that blessed Spirit of wisdom, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, whose tender mercies are over all His works. *Alford.*

8. Maketh grass to grow upon the

mountains. Not only in their power of growing without cultivation, but also in the peculiarities of their structure, the mountain grasses proclaim the hand of God. Instead of producing flowers and seed as the grasses in the tranquil valleys do, the young plants spring from them perfectly formed. They cling round the stem and form a kind of blossom. In this state they remain until the parent stalk withers and falls prostrate on the ground, when they immediately strike root and form independent grasses. This is a remarkable adaptation to circumstances; for it is manifest that were seeds instead of living plants developed in the ears of the mountain grasses, they would be useless in the stormy regions where they grow. They would be blown away far from the places they were intended to clothe, to spots foreign to their nature and habits, and thus the species would speedily perish. The more we think of it, the more we are struck with the wise foresight which suggested the creative fiat, "Let the earth bring forth grass." It is the most abundant and the most generally diffuse of all vegetation. It suits almost every soil and climate.

Macmillan.

Gather a single blade of grass, and examine for a minute, quietly, its narrow, sword-shaped strip of fluted green. Nothing, as it seems there, of notable goodness or beauty. And yet, think of it well, and judge whether of all the gorgeous flowers that beam in summer air, and of all strong and goodly trees pleasant to the eyes or good for food—stately palm and pine, strong ash and oak, scented citron, burdened vine—there be any by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced as that narrow point of feeble green. And well does it fulfil its mission. Consider what we owe to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft, countless, and peaceful spears of the field! Follow but for a little time the thought of all that we ought to recognize in those words. All spring and summer is in them; the walks by silent, scented paths, the rest in noonday heat, the joy of the herds and flocks, the power of all shepherd life and meditation; the life of the sunlight upon the world, falling in emerald streaks and soft blue shadows, when else it would have struck on the dark mould or scorching dust; pastures beside the pacing brooks, soft banks and knolls of lowly hills, thymy slopes of down overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea; crisp lawns all dim with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of barred sunshine, dinted by happy feet, softening in their

fall the sound of loving voices. All these are summed in the simple words ; and these are not all. Go out in the springtime, among the meadows that slope from the shores of the Swiss lakes to the roots of their lower mountains. There, mingled with the taller gentians and the white narcissus, the grass grows deep and free ; and as you follow the winding mountain paths beneath arching boughs all veiled and dim with blossom—paths that forever droop and rise over the green banks and mounds sweeping down in scented undulation, steep to the blue water, studded here and there with new-mown heaps, filling all the air with fainter sweetness—look up toward the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines ; and we may, perhaps, at last know the meaning of those quiet words of the one hundred and forty-seventh Psalm, “He maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains.” *Ruskin.*

9. Young ravens which cry. No bird is more careful of its young ones than the raven. To its habit of flying restlessly about in search of food to satisfy its own appetite and that of its young ones may perhaps be traced the reason of its being selected by the sacred writers as an object of God’s especial care. *W. Houghton.*

10. The best explanation of this verse is that it was intended to describe horse and foot, or cavalry and infantry, as forming the military strength of armies. It is not to those who trust in these that God is disposed to extend favor, nor to these advantages at all attract Him. A.—It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace that God is pleased to own. H.

11. Pleased (is) Jehovah with those fearing Him, with those hoping for His mercy. A.—They that fear the Lord ; *i.e.*, they that, recognizing their own feebleness, feel themselves dependent upon His omnipotence—it is in these that He delights, in such as, renouncing all self-confident dependence upon their own efforts, wait for His grace. D.

Them that fear Him, those that hope in His mercy. A sincere Christian is known by both these—a fear of God, or a constant obedience to His commands, and an affiance, trust, and dependence upon His mercies. Sweetly are both these coupled, a uniform, sincere obedience to Him, and an unshaken constant reliance on His mercy and goodness ! The whole perfection of the Christian life is comprised in these two, believing God and fearing Him, trusting in His mercy and fearing His name ; the one maketh us careful in avoiding sin, the other dil-

igent to follow after righteousness ; the one is a bridle from sin and temptations, the other a spur to our duties. Fear is our curb, and hope our motive and encouragement ; the one respects our duty, and the other our comfort ; the one allayeth the other. God is so to be feared as also to be trusted ; so to be trusted as also to be feared. Such as both believe in God and fear to offend him are the only men who are acceptable to God and His people. God will take pleasure in them, and they take pleasure in one another. *Manton.*—His mercy is “great ;” it is “plenteous ;” it is “abundant ;” it is “everlasting ;” many times we are told that it “endureth forever ;” it is “high as heaven ;” nay, “above the heavens,” and the “earth is full” of it ; God is “rich” in it ; He “magnifies” it ; He “delights in” it ; while, as for the man who is its object, it “follows” him through life ; it “compasses him about,” “crowns” him like a coronal. *Dykes.*

12. Again the Psalmist begins his hymn of praise, and now with a direct reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the bright prospect which seemed to dawn upon the nation after its restoration. P.

12-20. The summons is addressed to the Church again gathered round Jerusalem on the soil of the promised land. The holy city has again risen out of its ruins ; now once more it has gates which can stand open in broad daylight, and which, as the darkness falls, can be closed and bolted for the security of the community that as yet was small in point of numbers (*Neh.* 7 : 1-4). The blessing of God rests once more upon the children of the holy mother-city. Its territory, which has experienced all the horrors of war, and which formerly resounded with the din of arms and lamentation and destruction, God has now, from being a field of battle, made into peace ; and seeing the land can now again be cultivated in peace, the ancient promise is fulfilled, that God would feed His people, if they would only obey Him, with the fat of wheat. The God of Israel is indeed the Almighty Ruler of the world of nature. It is He that sends His mandate earthward ; the Word is His messenger ; *i.e.*, it runs as swiftly as possible in order to discharge the commission upon which it is sent. It is He that sends down snowflakes like flocks of wool, so that the fields are covered with snow as with a white woollen warm cloth. He scatters hoar-frost about like ashes, so that trees are crusted over with the fine frozen dew or mist, as if they were powdered with ashes which the wind has blown hither and thither. Another time He casts down His ice

as hailstones. It comes to pass, further, that God sends forth His word and makes them (snow, hoar-frost, and ice) melt away; He makes His thawing wind blow, the waters flow; *i.e.*, as soon as the one takes place the other also takes place forthwith. This God now, who rules all things by His Word and fashions them according to His will, is the God of the revelation made known in the history of redemption, the revelation which has come to Israel, and as the bearer of which Israel takes the place of honor among the nations. D.

14. The devout Hebrew loved to remember that God's miracles were but the prelude to God's providence. And among the special benefits for which thanksgiving was rendered was this, that it was a land at once removed from the world's fields of strife and blessed with the world's chiefest cereals. God's grace was seen as much in their homes as in their history, and in their harvests as in their laws. *Interior.*—Peace and wheat! The two things are germane, joined together and inseparable. War is destruction and death. The fruits of the earth and all the best products of human industry wither before it; want and famine follow in its path. Peace is the essential condition of plenty, and of plenty, in all its forms, wheat is the appropriate symbol. Where the sower scatters the seed and the reaper gathers the harvest in safety; where children have abundance of bread; where the kneading trough and the pantry, the storehouse, the freight train, and the swift ships of commerce are all filled with the finest of the wheat—there all the arts that sustain and adorn human life must flourish, and there the Almighty Father blesses human industry with the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth. The wealth of nations and of individuals comes out of our mother earth. It does not consist in gold and silver; they are only its counters and the medium of exchange. It consists in that which will build our houses and keep us warm in winter, and furnish the means of transportation, and cover our nakedness and feed our hunger. And when we have more of these than we need, then with the surplus we can pay our debts and honestly increase our temporal comforts with the surplus industries and products of other lands. And this is just the process by which God has gradually turned the tide of prosperity to our shores, and fills every generous heart with devout thanksgiving. "He has made peace in our borders and filled us with the finest of wheat." H. J. V.

Behind the snowy loaf is the mill-wheel; behind the mill the wheat field; on the wheat-field

falls the sunlight; above the sun is God. *Russell.*

16. Frosts are from God; with Him are the *treasures of the snow and the hail* (Job 38 : 22, 23), and out of these treasures He draws as He pleases. *He giveth snow like wool*; it is compared to wool for its whiteness (Isa. 1 : 18) and its softness; it falls silently and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool; it covers the earth, and keeps it warm, like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness. See how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow. H.

"The snowflake," as Professor Tyndall strikingly says, "leads back to the sun," so intimately related are all things to each other in this wonderful universe. It leads further and higher still, even to Him who is our sun and shield, the light and heat of all creation. The whole vast realm of winter, with its strange phenomena, is but the breath of God. S.

In the range of inorganic nature, I doubt if any object can be found more perfectly beautiful than a fresh, deep snowdrift seen under warm light. Its curves are of inconceivable perfection and changefulness; its surface and transparency alike exquisite; its light and shade of inexhaustible variety and inimitable finish, the shadows sharp, pale and of heavenly color, the reflected lights intense and multitudinous, and mingled with the sweet occurrences of transmitted light. No mortal hand can approach the majesty or loveliness of it. *Ruskin.*

Look, first, at the *beauty* of the snow. It makes a spiritual world of this dull, dark earth of ours; and the fields that seemed fit only for the growth of man's food and the tread of weary feet in the common labors of life, covered with its white, immaculate carpet, look like a celestial floor on which white-winged angels on lofty errands of mercy might alight from the kindred heavens. The snow-crystals are the blossoms of inorganic nature. Their beauty is not a chance endowment. It is God's Hall-mark, attesting that the work is His. Such beauty is a reflection of the Divine image, not something that God does, but something that He is, really and suitably a part of Himself. It awakens that curiosity about God which is an essential element of worship. He who arranged the particles of snow into such exquisite shapes of beauty can bring order out of our confusion and change our vile bodies and spirits into the likeness of Christ's. Look at the *power* of the snow. In a few hours God's little army of snowflakes does a work which defies all the resources of

man to undo it, and before which he has to pause baffled and defeated. Look, further, at the *service* of the snow. "He giveth snow like wool," says the Psalmist. The comparison expressively indicates one of the most important purposes which the snow serves in the economy of nature. It covers the earth like a blanket during that period of winter sleep which is necessary to recruit its exhausted energies and prepare it for fresh efforts in spring. He who warms the tender latent life of the flowers by the snow, and moulds the quiet beauty of the summer landscape by the desolating glacier, makes the cold of adversity to cherish the life of the soul, and to round into spiritual loveliness the harshness and roughness of a carnal, selfish nature. Look at the *Giver* of the snow. The Psalmist had not the shadow of a doubt that God formed and sent the annual miracle of snow, as He had formed and sent the daily miracle of manna in the desert. It was a commonplace thing; it was a natural, ordinary occurrence; but it had the Divine sign upon it, and it showed forth the glory and goodness of God as strikingly as the most wonderful supernatural event in his nation's history. *Macmillan.*

17. He casteth forth His ice like morsels. Or, *shivers of bread*. It is a worthy saying of one from this text: The ice is bread, the rain is drink, the snow is wool, the frost is fire to the earth, causing it inwardly to glow with heat; teaching us what to do for God's poor. *Trapp.*—*Who can stand before His cold?* The beasts cannot; they retire into dens (Job 37: 8), they are easily conquered then. Men cannot, but are forced to take the benefit of fires or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects, and therefore we must call it *His cold*, it is of His sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses and clothes and beds.

18. Thaws are from God; when He pleases *He sendeth out His Word, and melteth them*; the frost, the snow, the ice, are all dissolved quickly, in order to which He *causes the wind, the south wind, to blow*, and the waters which were frozen flow again as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the First Cause. And in it we must take notice not only of the power of God that He can so suddenly, so insensibly make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air and the face of the earth (what cannot He do that doeth this every winter, perhaps often every winter?), but

also of the goodness of God; hard weather does not always continue—it, would be sad if it should; He does not *contend forever*, but *renews the face of the earth*. H.

The grass and flowers and trees are provided for and preserved by the physiological laws of their own growth, and the animal kingdom has the added power of instinct supplementing the physiological function of organs; structure, function, and instinct all working together in effective concert prepare the endangered species for the wintry frost and storms, and for the work of another spring when the round of life is once more to begin. The old story ever new, newer and better as we learn more of it at every repetition. *P. A. Chadbourne.*

The soft gales from the south which bring a general thaw are from the Lord, as were those wintry blasts which bound the streams in icy bonds. Simple but effectual are the methods of Jehovah in the natural world; equally so are those which He employs in the spiritual kingdom; for the breath of His Holy Spirit breathes upon frozen hearts, and streams of penitence and love gush forth at once. Observe how in these two sentences the Word and the wind go together in nature. They attend each other in grace; the Gospel and the Holy Spirit co-operate in salvation. S.

19. When the Psalmist would praise God for the preservation of Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem, as he does in this Psalm, it is not to the wonderful miraculous events with which the history of Israel abounded that he directs attention, but to the common events of Providence and the ordinary appearances and processes of nature. He cannot think enough of the Omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the universe entering into familiar relations with His people and condescending to their humblest wants. It is the same God that "giveth snow like wool," who "shows His Word unto Jacob, and His statutes and commandments unto Israel." And the wonder of the peculiarity is enhanced by thoughts borrowed from the wonders of nature. *Macmillan.*

20. The ancient Israelites fed upon the dainties of the earth and the corn of heaven. Yet they were endowed with the richer blessings of being a light to enlighten the gentiles; they were a city set on a hill; they might have been philanthropists on the largest scale; they were the depositaries of knowledge inestimable. By their bright example all the surrounding tribes might have been won over to the true religion. In respect to their position, central, illuminating, furnished with attractive influ-

ences, God had dealt with them as He had with no other nation. B. B. E.

The most distinctive feature which is common to all the writers in the Old Testament, and peculiar to no one age or portion of the literature, while the classical authors of Greece and Rome, as well as the writings of Confucius, and even the Hymns of the Veda, may be said in comparison to be entirely devoid of it, is an unswerving faith in God, and a confident and firm reliance and dependence upon His unfailing goodness and mercy. We may truly say that, beyond the limits of the Old Testament, and those writings which have come under its influence and imbibed its spirit there is nothing that bears any adequate analogy to this feature. Here these ancient writings stand pre-eminent and unique. And this fact alone, as characterizing the best specimens of the nation who produced such a literature is sufficient to stamp them as the covenant people of God. If the Almighty were to make a covenant with any nation, we might surely pronounce beforehand that this is how it would manifest itself. But this in the Jewish nation is how it did manifest itself, as witnessed by the national literature; and seeing that a like manifestation was made in no other people, the inference is inevitable—nay, forced upon us, that their poet was war-

ranted in his joyous and grateful outburst, *He hath not dealt so with any nation. Leathes.*

There is not a moment of any day of our lives when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. It is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, nor in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire; but in the still small voice. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual, that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood; things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally; which are never wanting and never repeated; which are to be found always, yet each found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given. *Ruskin.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

1 PRAISE YE THE LORD !

Praise ye the LORD from the heavens;
Praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels :

Praise ye him, all his host.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon :

Praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heaven of heavens,

And ye waters that be above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD :

For he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever :

He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,

Ye dragons, and all deeps :

8 Fire and hail, snow and vapour ;

Stormy wind, fulfilling his word :

9 Mountains and all hills ;

Fruitful trees and all cedars :

10 Beasts and all cattle ;

Creeping things and flying fowl :

11 Kings of the earth and all peoples ;

Princes and all judges of the earth :

12 Both young men and maidens ;

Old men and children :

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD ;

For his name alone is exalted :

His glory is above the earth and heaven.

14 And he hath lifted up the horn of his people,

The praise of all his saints ;

Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.

PRAISE YE THE LORD !

Let the Heavens and the Earth PRAISE JEHOVAH.

THIS Psalm abounds in the boldest personifications. It not only celebrates the Almighty rule of God over all the creatures He has made, but calls upon them all to utter His praise. *De Witt.*—The great Hallelujah chorus rises in this Psalm to a loftier strain, calling upon all that is in the heavens (other than God) and all that is upon the earth to unite in extolling the Great God with highest praises. With noticeable method and order vs. 1-6 group together the details of the upper, heavenly world; while vs. 7-14, in like manner, seize upon the salient points of this earthly sphere—first, the inanimate and the unintelligent orders; and lastly, the intelligent. C.

In this splendid anthem the Psalmist calls upon the whole creation, in its two great divisions (according to the Hebrew conception) of heaven and earth, to praise Jehovah. Things with and things without life, beings rational and irrational, are summoned to join the mighty chorus. The Psalm is an expression of the loftiest devotion, and embraces at the same time the most comprehensive view of the relation of the creature to the Creator. P.

In this Psalm the loftiest believing consciousness is united with the grandest possible view of the world. The Church appears here as the leader of the praising universe. It knows that its experiences have a central and universal significance for the collective life of creation; that the grace bestowed upon it is sufficient to transport all beings in heaven and on earth into joyous commotion. And it calls not only upon everything in heaven and on earth, that stands with it in fellowship of thought, of word, and of freedom, to praise God, but also upon sun, moon, and stars, water, earth, fire, and air, mountains, trees, and beasts; yea, even such phenomena of nature as hail, snow, and mist. D.

It is but faintly and afar off that the ancient liturgies (except so far as they merely copied their originals) come up to the majesty and the wide compass of the Hebrew worship, such as it is indicated in the one hundred and forty-eighth Psalm. Neither Ambrose, nor Gregory, nor the Greeks, have reached or approached this level. Feeble, indeed, is the tone of these anthems of the ancient Church; sophisticated or artificial is their style. Nor would it be possible—it has never yet seemed so—to Christianize the Hebrew anthems, retaining their power, their earth-like richness, and their manifold splendors—which are the very splendors and

the true riches and the grandeur of God's world—and withal attempered with expressions that touch to the quick the warmest human sympathies. As to the powers of sacred poetry, those powers were expanded to the full, and were quite expended too, by the Hebrew bards. What are modern hymns but so many laborious attempts to put in a new form that which, as it was done in the very best manner so many ages ago, can never be well done again, otherwise than in the way of a verbal repetition. I. T.

1. The thrice-repeated exhortation, "*Praise . . . Praise . . . Praise*," in this verse is not merely imperative, nor only hortative, but it is an exultant hallelujah. *Geier.*

The call does not rise step by step from below upward, but begins forthwith from above in the highest and uttermost spheres of creation. The place from whence, above all, the praise is to resound, is the heavens; it is to resound in the heights—viz., the heights of heaven. D.

2. *Praise ye Him, all His angels.* Angels are first invoked, because they can praise God with humility, reverence, and purity. The highest are the humblest, the leaders of all created hosts are the most ready themselves to obey. *Le Blanc.*—They were already praising their Maker before the light of day, and they have never ceased their holy song. They praised Christ as God when they sang their *Gloria in Excelsis* at the incarnation, and they praised Him as man when they ministered to Him after His temptation and before His crucifixion. *Lorinus.*

These blessed spirits surround the throne of God with endless praise and adoration. Admitted, as pure creatures, to see His face, the mere presence of God, the mere nearness of perfect goodness and love doth cause them to prostrate themselves in worship, and pour out themselves to Him in sacred hymns. Praise and worship seem to be the natural gesture of un-fallen creatures in the presence of their Creator. In the simple, exulting loyalty of beings created, yet excellent in strength, yielding themselves up in cheerful uprightness and gladness of duty to be filled with His Spirit, in the presence of whom they stand, such creatures seem to render to their Maker, as they are perfect in their kind, and the more in proportion as they are more perfect in their kind, the tribute of thankful praise. *Moberly.*

3, 4. Let the sun, the fount of light, and warmth, and gladness, the greater light which rules the day, the visible emblem of the uncreated wisdom, the Light which lighteth every man, the centre round whom all our hopes and

fears, our wants and prayers, our faith and love, are ever moving; let the moon, the lesser light which rules the night, the type of the Church, which giveth to the world the light she gains from the Sun of Righteousness; let the stars, so vast in their number, so lovely in their arrangement and their brightness, which God hath appointed in the heavens, even as He hath appointed His elect to shine forever and ever; let all the heavens with all their wonders and their worlds, the depths of space above, and the waters which are above the firmament, the images of God's Holy Scripture and of the glorious and the mysteries contained therein—let these ever praise Him who made and blessed them in the beginning of the creation. *Bur-gon.*

4. This verse sublimely traverses the immensities which are the home of the most exalted dignities who wait on Deity, and then it descends to the firmament where the meteors flash forth, and where the heavens stoop to lift the clouds that aspire from earth. And the idea sustained is that all these vast realms, higher and lower, are one temple of unceasing praise. *Venema.*

5. *Let them praise the name of the Lord; for He commanded, and they were created.* The name of Jehovah is written legibly upon His works, so that His power, wisdom, goodness, and other attributes are therein made manifest to thoughtful men, and thus His name is praised. The highest praise of God is to declare what He is. The Lord is to be extolled as creating all things that exist, and as doing so by the simple agency of His Word. He created by a command; what a power is this! Well may He expect those to praise Him who owe their being to Him. The voice which said, "Let them be," now saith, "Let them praise."

6. Submission to law is praise. Obedience is homage; order is harmony. In this respect the praise rendered to Jehovah from the "bodies celestial" is absolutely perfect. His almighty power upholds all things in their spheres, securing the march of stars and the flight of seraphs; and thus the music of the upper regions is never marred by discord. The eternal hymn is forever chanted; even the solemn silence of the spheres is a perpetual Psalm. S.

7-14. The call to praise Jehovah now turns in the second group of verses to the earth and everything that belongs to it in the widest compass. D.

7. The second great division of created things—that is, according to the Old Testament view, *the earth.* *Sea-monsters*, mentioned first, as at

the bottom of the scale in creation, as in Gen. 1: 21. P.

8. Winter has glories all of its own—"hail, snow, and vapor, stormy wind, fulfilling His word," who has appointed the seasons in their regular succession, and who has "marked the bounds that winter may not pass, and blunts its pointed fury." Doubtless, in ways which we cannot fathom, the hail and snow and wintry storm do fulfil His Word. But there are also ways in which, by their immediate effects in these northern homes of ours, they do directly His great will in binding together more strongly those family ties which are of His own ordaining. Our northern winters make home dearer than ever, and the social intercourse at "our ain fireside" binds us one to another in the exercise of the sweet charities of the household. The home which God, rejoicing in the tender name of Father, has built up, brings us nearer to Himself. God, who loves to show Himself as the Head of the great family of heaven and earth, specially blesses whatever promotes family union. *J. A. Camden.*

The "*stormy wind*" is the swift messenger of God. The hurricane fulfils the Divine command. "Even the winds and the sea obey Him." The words of this verse have special use; for men are exceedingly apt to ascribe the violence of tempests to blind chance. *Geier.*—The law of storms is unquestionably that of providential good, just as truly as the law of fair weather. And many an instructive moral might we gather from the lessons of storms, besides our observance of the manner in which God produces, controls, and uses them. As He hath His way in the whirlwind and the storm, so He hath in all our trials, which are the storms and tempests of our mortal pilgrimage, and in which, or under which, or through the means of which, the character justly and carefully disciplined, grows more in grace and ripens faster for glory than in serene and shining weather. *Cheever.*

Nature's swift changes from heat to cold, and from storm to calm, are but ever-recurring intimations that God fulfils His work in many different ways. One cannot but feel awe at the touch of the zephyr when he remembers that the same power which moves it also whirls the cyclone; and one can face fearlessly the cyclone when he feels in his heart that He who thunders in the whirlwind is the same God who whispers in the zephyr. Heat and cold and the "stormy wind, fulfilling His Word," have each their place in God's world of nature; and joy and sorrow, and the sudden stroke of unex-

pected calamity, have each their place in His world of grace. When the Psalmist contemplated these changes in nature, as evidencing Divine power, he could not refrain from calling upon others to join with him in praising the Lord for all His goodness to the children of men ; and surely his must be unseeing eyes and an unfeeling heart who, looking upon God's works in the kingdom of grace, does not praise God for the sorrow that strengthened, as well as the joy that cheered, and especially for those sudden strokes of chastisement which recalled the erring one from wandering in deceitful paths which lead down only to death. S. S. T.

9. *The mountains and all hills, fruit-trees and all cedars.* Not *fruitful* trees as distinguished from barren trees, but *fruit-trees* (literally, *tree of fruit*), as distinguished from forest-trees, here represented by the cedar, which is usually spoken of in Scripture as the noblest species, and therefore called the *cedar of God*. A.

Mountains and all hills. What voices have the hills ! How solemn the sounds of the mountains from their sublime solitudes ! The mountains thunder, and the hills re-echo ; but they speak peace and send down plenty to the vales in running rivulets. *Le Blanc.*—It was, indeed, absolutely necessary that such eminences should be created, in order to fit the earth in any wise for human habitation ; for without mountains the air could not be purified, nor the flowing of the rivers sustained, and the earth must have become for the most part desert plain or stagnant marsh. But the feeding of the rivers and the purifying of the winds are the least of the services appointed to the hills. To fill the thirst of the human heart for the beauty of God's working, to startle its lethargy with the deep and pure agitation of astonishment, are their higher missions. They are as a great and noble architecture ; first giving shelter, comfort, and rest ; and covered also with mighty sculpture and painted legend. It is impossible to examine in their connected system the features of even the most ordinary mountain scenery without concluding that it has been prepared in order to unite as far as possible, and in the closest compass, every means of delighting and sanctifying the heart of man. But among the true mountains of the greater orders the Divine purpose of appeal at once to all the faculties of the human spirit becomes still more manifest. Inferior hills ordinarily interrupt in some degree the richness of the valleys at their feet ; but the great mountains *lift* the lowlands on their *sides*. And

whatever is lovely in the lowland scenery becomes lovelier in this change : the trees which grew heavily and stiffly from the level line of plain assume strange curves of strength and grace as they bend themselves against the mountain-side ; they breathe more freely, and toss their branches more carelessly as each climbs higher, looking to the clear light above the topmost leaves of its brother tree ; the flowers which on the arable plain fell before the plough, now find out for themselves unapproachable places where, year by year, they gather into happier fellowship, and fear no evil ; and the streams which in the level land crept in dark eddies by unwholesome banks now move in showers of silver, and are clothed with rain-bows, and bring health and life wherever the glance of their waves can reach. *Ruskin.*

Fruitful trees. Rather *fruit-trees* ; the fruit-bearing tree being representative of one division of the vegetable world, planted and reared by man ; the “cedars” of the other, which are (Psalm 104 : 16) of God's own plantation. So in v. 10 we have *wild* animals and *domesticated* animals. *Aglen.*—The praise of God is in the rustling voices of the trees. They fulfil His purpose in giving fruit to refresh, and shelter and shadow for a covert, and their murmur is the soft cadence that chants mercy and grace. Thus the trees of the wood redound to His glory. *Le Blanc.*

The seeds which are to prolong the race, innumerable according to the need, are made beautiful and palatable, varied into infinitude of appeal to the fancy of man or provision for his service : cold juice, or glowing spice, or balm, or incense, softening oil, preserving resin, or lulling charm, and all these presented in forms of endless change. Fragility or force, softness and strength, in all degrees and aspects ; unerring uprightness, as of temple pillars, or undivided wandering of feeble tendrils on the ground, mighty resistances of rigid arm and limb to the storms of ages, or wavings to and fro with faintest pulse of summer streamlet. Roots cleaving the strength of rock, or binding the transience of the sand ; crests basking in sunshine of the desert, or hiding by dripping spring and lightless cave ; foliage far tossing in entangled fields beneath every wave of ocean, clothing with variegated, everlasting films the peaks of the trackless mountains, or ministering at cottage doors to every gentlest passion and simplest joy of humanity. Being thus prepared for us in all ways, and made beautiful and good for food, and for building, and for instruments of our hands, this race of

plants, deserving boundless affection and admiration from us, become, in proportion to their obtaining it, a nearly perfect test of our being in right temper of mind and way of life; so that no one can be far wrong in either who loves the trees enough, and every one is assuredly wrong in both who does not love them, if his life has brought them in his way. *Ruskin.*

All cedars. Beautiful indeed is the pine forest in all seasons: in the freshness of spring, when the gnarled boughs are penetrated and mollified by the soft wind and the warm sun, and, thrilled with new life, burst out into fringes and tassels of the richest green and cones of the tenderest purple; beautiful in the sultry summer, when among its cool, dim shadows the cheated hours all day sing vespers, while the open landscape is palpitating in the scorching heat; beautiful in the sadness of autumn, when its unfading verdure stands out in striking relief amid changing scenes, that have no sympathy with anything earthly save sorrow and decay, and directs the thoughts to the imperishableness of the heavenly Paradise; beautiful exceedingly in the depth of winter, when the tiers of branches are covered with pure, unsullied wreaths of snow, sculptured by the wind into curves of exquisite grace. It is beautiful in calm, when the tree-tops scarce whisper to each other, and the twitter of the golden wren sounds loud in the expectant hush; it is more than beautiful in storm, when the wild fingers of the wind play the most mournful music on its great harp-strings, and its full diapason is sublime as the roar of the ocean on a rock-bound shore. It looks like a place made for worship, all its sentiments and associations seem of a sacred and solemn character. Nature, with folded hands, as Longfellow says, seems kneeling there in prayer. It certainly reminds us in various ways of the power, wisdom, and goodness of Him who thus spake by the mouth of His prophet: "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together; that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." *Macmillan.*

11-13. Every creature is full of the praise of God. The phenomena of nature—clouds, snow, rain, wind—are His messengers; the unchangeable laws, according to which the countless worlds above pursue their course, proclaim the glory of His omnipotent Word. In our own world, the animal and vegetable kingdoms, down to their lowest stages, bear the impress

of the goodness and omnipotence of God, and are a song of praise upon His glorious attributes. But it belongs to man, above every creature, as the priest of nature, to give an audible expression to her universal praise; a service in which every rank, every age, and every generation have abundant cause for engaging. *Anon.*

12, 13. The Psalms are Church songs, and all who belong to the Church are to sing them. "*Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children; let them praise the name of the Lord.*" The ripe believer who can triumph in the steadfast hope of God's glory is to lend his voice to swell the song of the Church when she cries to God out of the depths; and the penitent, who is still sitting in darkness, is not to refrain his voice when the Church pours out in song her sense of God's love. The whole Church has fellowship in the Psalms. *W. Binnie.*

Music is, beyond all other arts, the expression and vehicle of sympathy. No other art, no other mode of impression, equals music in its power to awaken a common feeling. The orator approaches it, but he deals chiefly with convictions; and conviction is a slow and hard path to feeling, while music makes a direct appeal. The united action of the full chorus and orchestra is a perfect transcript, down to the last and finest particular, of perfected human society. Music as an expression of feeling is a prophecy of that grander exercise of our nature for which we hope. It is the nature of feeling to express itself. Thought may stay behind silent lips; but when it becomes feeling, it runs to expression. Music is an illustration of this law of our emotions, and is the natural expression of deep feeling. History all along culminates in song. The summits of Jewish history from Miriam to David are vocal with Psalms. In some supernal sense, music will be the vocation of humanity when its full redemption is come. The summit of existence is feeling, the summit of character is sympathy, and music is the art-form that links them together. Music is the truest and most nearly adequate expression of the religious emotions, and so becomes prophetic of the destiny of man as a religious being. Music is creatively designed for religion, and not for anything else. It lends itself to almost every human feeling, down to the vilest, but always with suppression of its power. It is not until it is used for the expression of that wide range of feeling which we call religious that it discloses its full powers. Music is the art-path to God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. *Munger.*

14. *And He has raised up a horn for His people, praise for all His saints, for the children of Israel—a people near to Him. Hallelujah!* While all the creatures before mentioned have abundant cause to praise God for His infinite perfection and His goodness to themselves, a peculiar obligation is incumbent on His people; first, for His distinguishing favor through all periods of their history; and then, for a special mercy recently experienced, the restoration from captivity, now completed by the renewal of the temple and the reconstruction of the city walls. This restoration is described by a favorite Davidic figure, as exalting or lifting up the horn of Israel. **A.**—The Israel of the exile had lost its horn, *i.e.*, its reputation and its power for defence or attack. Now God has again given it a horn, and indeed a high one, *i.e.*, He has helped it to attain again to a position of independence among the nations that commands respect. **D.**

The whole creation, the heavens and their unnumbered worlds, all kingdoms of the material universe, are vocal with conscious or unconscious praise, declaring to His gratified ear His wondrous glory. We may not hear the vast harmony, infinite in variety as in strength, ceaselessly resounding through the illimitable firmaments which make the mighty fabric, a harmony to His fathomless spiritual sense ever audible. But we may hear the chorus of earth's voices to His praise, in the manifold sounds of winds and waters, gentle or terrible, the varied tones of the trees of the wood when played upon by the breath of the zephyr or the blast of the storm, with the manifold and many-toned utterances of the whole animal creation, all these manifold voices of earth, bespeaking

God's power, wisdom, and goodness, entering our thoughtful souls, suggest not vaguely the universal ordaining of praise to God as the sublime end and duty of *all* His creation. **B.**

The Being of God is a cause of rejoicing to the universe. Other things are drops, but this is the fountain. Other things are transient, insulated favors; fragments and atoms of beneficence; single flowers of mercy; single draughts of bliss; single odors, wafted from fields of fragrance, but God (let me speak reverently) is the very atmosphere, all comprehending and all-pervading, in which we live, and move, and have our being. Therefore, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord! He that would be joyful, let him be joyful in the Lord! The Book of Psalms is a chamber of holy voices, echo answering echo, deep calling unto deep, with the enthusiasm and rapture of adoring ecstasy and fearful love. We do but rehearse here what we shall utter above, when we call upon all things, silent or vocal, to praise the name of the Lord. **J. W. A.**

A life of praise bringeth comfort to the soul, as standing in the sunshine bringeth light and warmth; or as laboring doth warm the body; or as the sight and converse of our dearest friend, or the hearing of glad tidings doth rejoice the heart, without any great reasoning or arguing the case. This is the way to have comfort by feeling, to be much in the hearty praises of the Lord. When we come to heaven we shall have our joy by immediate vision, and the delightful exercise of love and praise. And if you would taste the heavenly joys on earth, you must imitate the joys of heaven in the ceaseless utterance of praise. *Anon.*

PSALM CXLIX.

1 PRAISE YE THE LORD!

- Sing unto the LORD a new song,
And his praise in the assembly of the saints.
- 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
- 3 Let them praise his name in the dance:
Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

- 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:
He will beautify the meek with salvation.
- 5 Let the saints exult in glory:
Let them sing for joy upon their beds.
- 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand;
- 7 To execute vengeance upon the nations,

And punishments upon the peoples ;
8 To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron ;

9 To execute upon them the judgment written :
This honour have all his saints.
PRAISE YE THE LORD !

THIS Psalm breathes the spirit of intense joy and eager hope which must have been in the very nature of things characteristic of the period which succeeded the return from the Babylonish captivity. Men of strong faith and religious enthusiasm and fervent loyalty must have felt that in the very fact of the restoration of the people to their own land was to be seen so signal a proof of the Divine favor, that it could not but be regarded as a pledge of a glorious future yet in store for the nation. The burning sense of wrong, the purpose of a terrible revenge, which was the feeling uppermost when they had first escaped from their oppressors (as in Psalm 137), was soon changed into the hope of a series of magnificent victories over all the nations of the world, and the setting up of a universal dominion. It is such a hope which is expressed here. P.

1. *Sing unto the Lord a new song.* Sing, for it is the fittest method for expressing reverent praise. God is ever new in His manifestations ; His mercies are new every morning ; His deliverances are new in every night of sorrow ; let your gratitude and thanksgivings be new also. Our singing should be "unto the Lord ;" the songs we sing should be of Him and to Him, "for of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things." S.

Saints. (*His*) *beloved*, or, "them that love Him." A name repeated vs. 5 and 9, and therefore characteristic of the Psalm. P.—A title not to be restricted to the godly of the first times, but common to all that are saved in all after-times also, as Eph. 4 : 12. This name putteth mere morality and formal profession out of countenance, as the sun doth a glow-worm. Saintship is a matter of Divine workmanship, and therefore it is far more remarkable than human excellence. In these times it is to be feared that the name is out of use, because holiness itself is out of fashion. T. *Goodwin*.

2. **Rejoice, be joyful.** Cheerfulness and a festival spirit fills the soul full of harmony. It composes music for churches and hearts ; it makes and publishes glorifications of God ; it produces thankfulness, and serves the ends of charity ; and when the oil of gladness runs over, it makes bright and tall emissions of light and holy fires, reaching up to a cloud, and making joy round about. And therefore, since

it is so innocent, and may be so pious and full of holy advantage, whosoever can innocently minister to this holy joy does set forward the work of religion and charity. *Bishop Taylor*. —An ounce of cheerfulness is worth a pound of sadness to serve God with. *Fuller*.

Give us the man who sings at his work ! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time, he will do it better, he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue while he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful must be uniformly joyous, a spiritual sunshine, graceful from very gladness, beautiful because bright. *Carlyle*.

4. The Lord "taketh pleasure in His people," because they are His people ; those whom He has purchased by His blood, renewed by His Spirit, and redeemed by His power. He "taketh pleasure in them," because in them He is Himself honored and glorified ; because He sees in them the fruit of His suffering and mediation ; because of the work which He has already begun in them ; because they already exhibit some traces of His own image, some transcript of that mind which was in Him, who was "meek and lowly in heart." The Lord takes pleasure in His people, inasmuch as He delights in *the exercise of their graces toward Him*. He takes pleasure in their poor attempts to please Him, because they are attempts. He weighs not the worth or merit of the action, but the principle and motive from which it springs. So the Lord hath pleasure in the *prosperity* of His people. We are expressly told that "He rejoiceth over them with joy ;" that "He rejoiceth over them to do them good."

4. **He will beautify the meek.** The scriptural term "*meekness*" is one which singularly characterizes and distinguishes the true Christian. It contains in itself a combination of graces, which are most evidently the fruit of the Spirit, and can grow on no other tree than on the Christian vine. As it respects God, it implies poverty of spirit ; humiliation of heart arising from a sense of guilt and a feeling of corruption ; submission to God's will ; silence

and patience under His rod ; acquiescence with His dispensations ; and a surrender of our own natural desires and inclinations to His overruling appointments. As it respects man, meekness comprehends lowliness of mind, and a readiness to prefer others before ourselves ; gentleness of disposition and behavior ; forbearance under provocations ; forgiveness of injuries ; quietness of spirit, and moderation in pushing forward our own interest and benefit. These are the qualities which distinguish "*the meek.*" *E. Cooper.*

Virtue, wisdom, and goodness, those graces of character which constitute moral beauty, never lose their power of attraction. The beauty that shines forth from a pure and sweet-tempered Christian soul far transcends, in all those qualities which command and hold a worthy admiration, the transient charm of mere outward adornment either of nature or art. Meekness, patience, kindness, charitableness, a self-denying spirit—these are the vestments of the highest type of beauty—the kind which commands not only the admiration of the best of men, but is admired by God Himself. *Hallock.*

Of meekness, one of the moderns (Rambach) has said, "It grows out of the ashes of self-love and on the grave of pride." Rooting itself deep in these antecedent beatitudes, in undesign, the sense of which is soul-poverty, and ill-desert, which worketh soul-sorrow, it holds itself ready to fall in with anything, the least or the worst, which God may give. This blessed frame of spirit toward God has its consequent and counterpart in the meek man's social temper. *Dykes.*—Meekness is that willingness to suffer wrong, or pain, or insult, from our neighbor patiently, and as a medicine from God, not a poison from man, which flows from the conviction that we deserve at God's hand far heavier chastisements than we receive ; and that all things, even the unkindness of others, are permitted for our good, and may be converted into blessings. *Monsell.*

There is scarcely a more beautiful or touching phenomenon than when prosperity, which elates a trivial or selfish nature, fills a worthier one, open to the perception of itself and others and of the infinite over all, with mingled lowliness and reverence. Certainly a pure and fixed serenity of spirit, an elevation of thought toward God, and a deepening consciousness of His overshadowing presence, are no unfitting accompaniments to outward successes or triumphs. "When I have ascended before men," says Lord Bacon, in that most sublime and

affecting prayer which he composed a few years before his death, "I have descended in humiliation before Thee." *Chulow.*

Meekness has its origin in the religious experience which we call conversion ; for it is when the top root of human pride is broken by a thorough crushing down of the soul of its sinfulness before God ; it is when the strong man, reduced to cry for mercy at the hands of infinite justice, is fain to receive forgiveness, and hope and peace with God, as unmerited gifts from the very grace of his Redeemer ; it is then, and through that religious change, that the heart grows susceptible of true meekness. Then meekness enters, and a tender feeling that one who has himself done so much evil in his day ought to bear with the evil-doing of other men ; that one who owes everything to mercy should be above all things merciful. *Dykes.*—Meekness is love at school ; love at the Saviour's feet. It is Christian lowliness. It is the disciple learning to know himself ; learning to fear and distrust and abhor himself. It is the disciple practising the sweet but self-emptying lesson of putting on the Lord Jesus, and finding all his righteousness in that righteous other. It is the disciple learning the defects of his own character, and taking hints from hostile as well as friendly monitors. It is the disciple praying and watching for the improvement of his talents, the mellowing of his temper, and the amelioration of his character. It is the living Christian at the Saviour's feet, learning of Him who is meek and lowly, and finding rest for his own soul. *Hamilton.*

5. This verse has been fulfilled in solemn crises of saintly life. On beds of death, and at the scaffold and the stake, joy and glory have been kindled in the hearts of Christ's faithful witnesses. *Le Blanc.*

6-9. "God's praises in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hand," for they were fresh from the wall-building of the city in which "they who builded on the wall and they that bare burdens, with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon" (Neh. 4:17). The whole passage looks back probably to the commission which God gave Israel to drive out the idolatrous Canaanites. So far as the *letter* of it is concerned, its form comes from the past, though in the *spirit* thereof its outlook may be into the future—the bloodless victories of truth over the hearts of the King's enemies. In the interpretation of this passage it would be quite unauthorized to ignore the great facts of the early history of Israel on the one hand, and not less so

on the other hand to ignore the great facts of the future age, set forth even then in prophecy and fulfilled in the Gospel era under the Prince of Peace who gives His people only "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." The letter of our passage comes from the former; the spirit and the present meaning are amply revealed in the latter. C.

6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand.* Praise and power go ever hand in hand. The two things act and react upon each other. An era of spiritual force in the Church is always one of praise; and when there comes some grand outburst of sacred song, we may expect that the people of God are entering upon some new crusade for Christ. Cromwell's Ironsides were sneeringly called Psalm-singers; but God's Psalm-singers are always Ironsides. He who has a "new song in his mouth" is ever stronger, both to suffer and to labor, than the man who has a dumb spirit and a hymnless heart. When he sings at his work, he will both do more and do it better than he would without his song. Hence, we need not be surprised that all through its history the Church of God has travelled, "along the line o' music." W. M. Taylor.

7. *To execute vengeance among the nations, punishments among the peoples.* Not their own vengeance, but that of God, to whom alone it appertains. This is really nothing more than a prediction, that God would use His people as His instruments in punishing the nations by whom they had themselves been persecuted and oppressed. This was partially fulfilled in the successes of the Maccabees, but under a new and unexpected form, in the spiritual triumphs of the true religion, and its actual or prospective subjugation of the world.

9. *As written* may mean written in the book of God's decrees, there is no need of supposing a reference to any part of Scripture. If there

be such reference, however, it is no doubt to the threatening in Deut. 32 : 41-43. To act as God's instruments in this great judicial process, so far from being a disgrace or hardship, is an honor reserved for all the objects of His mercy and subjects of His grace. The Psalm ends as it began, with *Hallelujah!* A.

(*The judgment written.*) This has been explained to mean the judgment written in the law, and that either the extermination of the Canaanites, as a pattern for all future acts of righteous vengeance (*Stier*); or, in a more general sense, such judgments as those threatened in Deut. 32 : 40-43. But perhaps it is better to take it as denoting a judgment fixed, as committed to writing, to denote its unalterable character, written thus by God Himself. As in Isa. 65 : 6, God says, "Behold it is written before Me : I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom."

It is an honor—that is, the subjection of the world described in the previous verses. But perhaps it is better to take the pronoun as referring to God : "He is a glory to all," etc.; *i.e.*, either His glory and majesty are reflected in His people; or He is the author and fountain of their glory; or He is the glorious object of their praise. P.

This honor have all His saints. All the godly shared in the triumphs of the Lord when He smote Israel's foes. We have like honor, but it is shown in victories of another sort. All the holy ones are sent upon errands by their holy Lord. The honors described in this Psalm are common to all the family of grace; and such service as the Lord appoints is to be undertaken by every one of them, without exception. The Lord honors all His chosen here, and He will glorify them all hereafter; this rule is without exception. Surely in this we have the best argument for glorifying the Lord, wherefore we close our new song with another Hallelujah, "*Praise ye the Lord.*" S.

PSALM CL.

- 1 PRAISE YE THE LORD.
PRAISE GOD IN HIS SANCTUARY :
PRAISE HIM IN THE FIRMAMENT OF
HIS POWER.
- 2 PRAISE HIM FOR HIS MIGHTY ACTS :
PRAISE HIM ACCORDING TO HIS EX-
CELLENT GREATNESS.
- 3 PRAISE HIM WITH THE SOUND OF
THE TRUMPET :
PRAISE HIM WITH THE PSALTERY
AND HARP.
- 4 PRAISE HIM WITH THE TIMBREL AND
DANCE :
PRAISE HIM WITH STRINGED IN-
STRUMENTS AND THE PIPE.
- 5 PRAISE HIM UPON THE LOUD CYM-
BALS :
PRAISE HIM UPON THE HIGH SOUND-
ING Cymbals.

- 6 LET EVERY THING THAT HATH
BREATH PRAISE THE LORD.
PRAISE YE THE LORD.

- 1 HALLELUJAH,
PRAISE GOD IN HIS SANCTUARY,
PRAISE HIM IN HIS STRONG FIRMAMENT !
- 2 PRAISE HIM FOR HIS MIGHTY ACTS,
PRAISE HIM ACCORDING TO THE ABUNDANCE
OF HIS GREATNESS !
- 3 PRAISE HIM WITH THE SOUND OF HORNS,
PRAISE HIM WITH HARP AND CITHERN !
- 4 PRAISE HIM WITH TIMBREL AND DANCE,
PRAISE HIM WITH STRINGS AND PIPE !
- 5 PRAISE HIM WITH CLEAR CYMBALS,
PRAISE HIM WITH CLANGING CYMBALS !

- ¶ LET EVERYTHING THAT HATH BREATH PRAISE
JEHOVAH,
HALLELUJAH ! D.

This is the great closing hallelujah, or doxology, of the Psalter, in which every kind of musical instrument is to bear its part as well as the voice of man, in which not one nation only, but "everything that hath breath," is invited to join. P.—This is the last of a score of Psalms which declare their own intention as anthems, adapted for that public worship which was the glory and delight of the Hebrew people ; a worship carrying with it the soul of the multitude by its simple majesty and by the powers of music, brought in their utmost force to recommend the devotions of earth in the hearing of heaven. Take it as a sample of this class, and bring the spectacle and the sounds into one, for the imagination to rest in. It was evidently to subserve the purposes of *music* that these thirteen verses are put together ; it was no doubt to give effect first to the human voice, and then to the alternations of instruments—loud and tender and gay—with the graceful movements of the dance, that the anthem was composed and its chorus brought out,

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord !

Praise ye the Lord !"

And so did the congregated thousands take up their part with a shout, "even as the voice of many waters." I. T.

The last three Psalms are a *triad of wondrous praise*, ascending from praise to higher praise, until it becomes exultation which knows no bounds. The joy overflows the soul, and spreads throughout the universe ; every creature is drawn into the chorus. Heaven is full of praise, the earth is full of praise, praises rise from under the earth, "everything that hath breath" joins in the rapture. God is encompassed by a loving, praising creation. And each Psalm increases in praise, love, and joy unto this last, which is praise celebrating its ecstasy. The heir of God begins every sentence with *Hallelujah* ; and his sentences are very short. The greatest number of words between any two Hallelujahs is four, and that only once ; in every other instance, between one Hallelujah and another there are but two words. It is as though the soul gave utterance to its whole life and feeling in the one word, *Hallelujah* ! The words, "Praise ye the Lord !" or "Praise Him !" "Praise Him !" "Praise Him !" are reiterated no fewer than twelve times in a short Psalm of six short verses. *John Pulsford.*

1. Praise Him both in earth and heaven. The *sanctuary* is the earthly one, and stands opposed to the *firmament* or *heaven*, called the *firmament of His power*, as being the most glorious proof and product of its exercise, and still

the scene of its most striking exhibitions. The phrase is to be understood as comprehending the *hosts of heaven*, both inanimate and living, both material and spiritual. A.

The sanctuary is manifestly here looked at as the temple of grace, the firmament as the temple of power. So the verse proclaims both grace and glory. *Geier*.—*Praise God in His sanctuary*. Where should He be praised but there where He does, in a special manner, both manifest His glory and communicate His grace? *Praise God* upon the account of *His sanctuary*, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us (Ez. 37 : 26).

2. *Praise Him for His mighty acts*; for *His mightinesses*, so the word is; for all the instances of His might, the power of His providence, the power of His grace; what He has done in the creation, government, and redemption of the world; for the children of men in general, for His own Church and children in particular. H.

1, 2. We are to praise Jehovah "in His sanctuary," in the place where His glory dwells, where His holiness shines forth with ineffable splendor; we are to praise Him in the wide expanse over which He has spread the tokens of His power, whether in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath; we are to praise Him for those omnipotent acts whereby He hath shown Himself to be above all gods; we are to praise Him in a manner suited to the excellent majesty of a Being whom all the heavens adore, and who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. His holiness, the infinity of His operations, the miraculous power which He has displayed, the unspotted excellence of His administration, call for loudest songs of praise from all whose reason enables them to rise to the contemplation of the great Supreme. *J. Morison*.

3. *Praise Him with blast of trumpet! Praise Him with harp and lyre!* Here begins an enumeration of the instruments employed in public worship, and therefore necessarily associated with the idea of Divine praise. The trumpet was used to assemble the people, and would therefore excite many of the same associations with our church-bells. The other instruments were used as actual accompaniments of the Psalms performed in public worship.

4. *Praise Him with timbrel and dance! Praise Him with strings and pipe!* The three great classes of instruments are here distinctly mentioned—namely, wind, stringed, and pulsatile. The last, represented by the drum or timbrel, still called by a kindred name in Arabic, is here accompanied by its inseparable adjunct

dancing, which might seem misplaced in a list of instruments, and those employed in sacred music, but for the peculiar usages and notions of the ancient Hebrews, with respect to this external sign of joy.

5. *Praise Him with cymbals of loud sound! Praise Him with cymbals of joyful noise!* The dominant idea, that of audibly expressed joy, is sustained to the last, where the cymbals are mentioned in both clauses, as an instrument peculiarly appropriated to occasions of unusual rejoicing. A.

6. *Let everything that hath breath*, and, above all, the voice of man, as opposed to the dead instruments mentioned before. What more fitting close than this of the great "Book of Praises"? P.

Let all breath praise Jehovah! Hallelujah. The very ambiguity of "*all breath*" gives extraordinary richness of meaning to this closing sentence. From the simple idea of wind instruments, mentioned in the context, it leads us, by a beautiful transition, to that of vocal, articulate, intelligent praise, uttered by the breath of living men, as distinguished from mere lifeless instruments. Then, lastly, by a natural association, we ascend to the idea expressed in the common version, "*everything that hath breath*," not merely all that lives, but all that has a voice to praise God. There is nothing in the Psalter more majestic or more beautiful than this brief but most significant *finale*, in which solemnity of tone predominates, without, however, in the least disturbing the exhilaration which the close of the Psalter seems intended to produce, as if in emblematical allusion to the triumph which awaits the Church and all its members, when through much tribulation they shall enter into rest. A.

As the life of the faithful and the history of the Church, so also the Psalter, with all its cries from the depths, runs out into a Hallelujah. *Hengstenberg*.—God is the desired end of love, as the running brook is of thirst. Here is the true fountain of praise and worship, love ascending out of self to rejoice in God. This is the meaning of the Psalmist. Let all created life bow itself before the majesty of God, before the beauty of holiness, the glory of uncreated love. "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." Praise is a sacrifice most acceptable in the sight of God. Praise is most blessed for us. To live in a spirit of praise is to live a life as near to heaven as earth can be. *H. E. Manning*.

Now that the Gospel is ordered to be preached to every human creature, it is required that every

human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit for, but to spend it in praising God ; and how can we spend it better ? Prayers are called *our breathings* (Lam. 3 : 56). Let every one that breathes toward God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth His praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath ; let us be in this work as in our element ; let it be to us as the air we *breathe in*, which we could not live without. Praise God with a holy love and delight ; praise Him with an entire confidence in Christ ; praise Him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness ; praise Him with an earnest desire toward Him and a full satisfaction in Him ; praise Him by a universal respect to all His commands ; praise Him by a cheerful submission to all His disposals ; praise Him by rejoicing in His love and solacing yourselves in His great goodness ; praise Him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of His grace ; praise Him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of His glory.

The first three of the five books of Psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with *Amen and Amen* ; the fourth with *Amen, Hallelujah* ; but the last, and in it the whole book, concludes only with *Hallelujah*, because the six last Psalms are wholly taken up in praising God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last Psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. *Hallelujah* is the word there (Rev. 19 : 1, 3), let us echo to it now as those that hope to join in it shortly. *Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord ! H.*

What a destiny, what a power hath poetry when inspired by God ! When my spirit is excited, or devotional, or sad, and seeks for an echo to its enthusiasm, its devotion, or its melancholy, I do not open Pindar or Horace, or Hafiz, those purely academic poets ; neither do I find within myself murmurings to express my emotion. I open the Book of Psalms, and there I find words which seem to issue from the soul of the ages, and which penetrate even to

the heart of all generations, words which embody the eternal hymn, the personified prayer and complaint of all humanity ! If we look back to that remote age when such songs resounded over the world ; if we consider that while the lyric poetry of all the most cultivated nations only sang of wine, love, blood, and the victories of coursers at the games of Elidus, we are seized with profound astonishment at the mystic accents of the shepherd prophet Psalmists who speak to God the Creator as one friend to another, who understand and praise His great works, admire His justice, implore His mercy, and become, as it were, an anticipative echo of the evangelic poetry, speaking the soft words of Christ before His coming. *Lamartine.*

Who is a Christian at all—who has any measure of spiritual discernment and sensibility, and does not love the Psalter ? Not only so, but you who value the book as a whole, are almost sure to have your favorite Psalm or Psalms, that seem always to strike an answering chord within your breast. Is it the 8th, that song in the night of the Son of man ? or the pastoral which every one knows—the 23d—a song which one has called the nightingale of the Psalms—“small and of a homely feather, but filling the air of the whole world with melodious joy ?” Is it a song of Messiah—the 2d, 22d, or 110th ? Is it the plaintive trustfulness of the 42d and 43d ? Is it the song of the great marriage (45th), or of the kingdom (72d), or of the vineyard (80th) ? Is it the sublime hymn of the covenant (89th), the odes of gratitude (103d and 116th), the celebration of God’s works (104th), or of His omnipresence and omniscience (139th) ? Or, what think you of the ringing Hallelujah Psalms that conclude the whole Psalter, as some masterpiece of music ends with full clear resounding notes, that fill the ear and swell the soul ? Nay, be not too partial ; step not from one favorite Psalm to another, but go through the book in detail, and you will find that through field and flood, over the hills of Bashan, and down into shaded valleys, now far off in the desert, now in the deep with rolling billows, and now in the meadows by the margin of still waters, you are led in repentance, faith, self-conquest, patient endurance, and holy aspiration, onward to the joy of the ransomed of the Lord, and the ecstasy of heavenly praise. *D. Fraser.*

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[In addition to the large number of unknown writers, the list for the Psalms comprises nearly 750 names. The appended dates refer either to the year of publication or to that of the writer's decease. To many readers this will prove of great interest, as well as of value for general reference.]

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|--|---|
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 Thomas Adams, 1614.
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 Rev. W. F. Adeney.
 Rev. R. Adkins.
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 Rev. A. S. Aglen.
 Henry Ainsworth, D.D., d. 1622.
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 Bp. Lancelot Andrews, d. 1626.
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 Samuel J. Andrews, D.D.
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 Thomas Armitage, D.D.
 Johan Arndt, d. 1767.
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 John Arrowsmith, d. 1659.
 Simeon Ash, d. 1662.
 Bartholomew Ashwood, 1688.
 Merle D'Aubigne, d. 1872.
 Augustine, d. 430.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p>Clement E. Babb, D.D.
 Francis Bacon, d. 1626.
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 Isaac Barrow, D.D., d. 1677.
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 Basil, d. 379.
 William Bates, D.D., d. 1699.
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 Paul Bayne, d. 1617.
 E. R. Beadle, D.D.
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 Henry W. Beecher, d. 1887.
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 Rev. Barton Bouchier, d. 1865.
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Rev. Archibald G. Brown.
David Brown, D.D.
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Rev. George Burder, d. 1832.
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Edmund Burke, d. 1797.
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Jabez Burns, D.D., d. 1876.
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George Bush, D.D., d. 1859.
 H. B. **Horace Bushnell, D.D., d. 1876.**
Rev. C. H. Butcher.
 B. **Bp. Joseph Butler, d. 1752.**
J. Glentworth Butler, D.D.
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H. S. Carpenter, D.D.
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Richard Clerke, d. 1634.
John Clifford, D.D.
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